SATURDAY
August 16, 2025

BENGALURU
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LANDMARK VICTORY

Women to lead AMMA for the next 3 years

SOUTH » PAGE 7

CSDS OPINION POLL

Large number of voters could be excluded by SIR exercise

NEWS » PAGE 10

ANIMAL TRANSPORTATION

Pet-friendly rides becoming popular

SOUTH » PAGE 7

HILL'S AGONY

The day a village in Uttarkashi disappeared

People grieve as floods, sludge devour Dharali

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 9

HIGH-STAKES SUMMIT

Trump, Putin greet each other in Alaska

WORLD » PAGE 14

NEARBY

Guarantees helped State economy, says CM

BENGALURU
State's economy was robust, bolstered by its welfare schemes, said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, addressing the Independence Day celebrations. » PAGE 4

DKS warns of action over misinformation

BENGALURU
Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has said that the State government is contemplating action against those who carried out a "misinformation campaign" against Dharmasthala and its authorities. » PAGE 6

PROPERTYPLUS » PAGE 5

PM calls for self-reliance, flags 'demographic plot'

Independence Day address peppered with announcements of economic and other reforms; Modi highlights the success of using Indian-made arms and weapon systems during Operation Sindoor

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a strong pitch for self-reliance in his Independence Day address, with policy prescriptions for economic- and security-related reforms. For any nation, even today, the yardstick of *aatma samman* (self-respect) remains *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance), he said, also using the speech to warn of a conspiracy to change the country's demographic make-up.

The speech was peppered with substantive announcements on reforms, which Mr. Modi presaged by stating that "self-reliance is not limited to import-export, rupees, pounds or dollars, but [is] linked to our strengths and capabilities".

The speech gains significance in the context of the 50% tariff on Indian goods announced by U.S. President Donald Trump, and included an oblique reference to the consequent challenges faced by India.

The Prime Minister said that India needed to be bigger by its own strength, not by trying to reduce the footprint of another country, adding that the "economic greed of some countries is evident", without naming names.

Starting with the deployment of Indian arms and weapons systems during Operation Sindoor, Mr. Modi said that self-reliance in defence and economic spheres is the cornerstone of a developed India.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 11

Key announcements

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address, announced economic- and security-related reforms, and emphasised self-reliance. Highlights from the speech:

PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Mission Sudarshan Chakra
India will be building an air defence system by 2035 to not only shield military and civilian areas but also to strike back in a precise, targeted manner

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana
The scheme would give a one-time grant of ₹15,000 to first-time employees in the private sector and incentives to the private sector to create employment

Made-in-India semiconductors
India will launch 'Made-in-India' semiconductor chips by the end of 2025

Nuclear energy capacity
India will aim at increasing its nuclear energy capacity 10-fold via its 10 nuclear energy plants by 2047

Major GST shake-up: 12% and 28% slabs to be axed

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Centre has proposed to reduce the number of slabs under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, retaining the 5% and 18% slabs, while introducing a lower concessional rate below 1% and a high "sin rate" of 40% on just five to seven items each, according to official sources.

This would mean eliminating the 12% and 28% tax brackets entirely. Of these, 99% of items currently in the 12% slab will be moved to the 5% rate, and 90% of goods and services in the 28% bracket will be moved to 18%.

There will be no additional cess levied over and above the GST rates.

These reforms would be part of a "Deepavali gift" from the Centre in the form of the "next-generation GST reforms", Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced during his Independence Day speech at Delhi's Red Fort on Friday. The reforms will reduce "tax burden on the common man", he added.

"There will, of course, be a hit to revenue, but it will not be so huge as to materially affect the fiscal deficit," an official source said.

"The thinking is that the lower rates will increase consumption, reduce evasion, and widen the tax net, leading to higher revenues by the end of the financial year."

The Ministry of Finance, in a press release, said that the Centre has sent its proposal on GST rate rationalisation and reforms to the Group of Ministers (GoM), which has been constituted by the GST Council to examine the issue.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 11

Rate revisions

The 12% and 28% GST slabs will be done away with soon. Of these, 99% of items currently in the 12% slab will be moved to the 5% rate and 90% of goods and services in the 28% bracket will move to 18% slab

CURRENT SLABS
- 0.25% (diamonds & semi-precious stones)
- 3% (jewellery & precious metals)
- Apart from these, the slabs were 5%, 12%, 18%, 28% and compensation cess

PROPOSED SLABS
- Less than 1% (only items earlier in 0.25% and 3% slabs)
- Apart from this, the main slabs will be 5%, 18%, with a 40% rate applicable on only five to seven 'sin' goods

One for the album

History in flowers: People at the Independence Day flower show at Lalbagh Botanical Garden in Bengaluru on Friday. ALLEN EGENUSE J. (REPORT ON PAGE 4)

10-year-old killed, 9 injured in blast caused by gas leak at a house in city

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 10-year-old boy was killed and at least nine injured in a blast suspected to be caused by gas leak at a house at Adugodi in south-eastern Bengaluru on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Mubarak, a Class 4 student. His eight-year-old sister, Fathima, who is being treated in a hospital, is seriously injured.

The incident occurred around 8.20 a.m. in a small house within a tightly packed settlement occupied by Kasturamma and her family at Chinnayyanapalya.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at the site of the blast.

The police received a call about the blast at 8.23 a.m., and the fire services was alerted two minutes later. Two fire tenders were dispatched immediately.

At least 17 houses, each measuring about 10 ft X 10 ft, were damaged owing to the impact of the explosion, with three of them completely destroyed. The blast's intensity shattered windows and doors of several neighbouring houses outside the cluster.

A senior police officer said that most of the injuries to the victims were caused by collapsing walls. Kasturamma's eight-year-old son is critical, according to doctors. The boy who died was found buried under a pile of debris.

Bengaluru city Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh told *The Hindu* that primary evidence from the spot indicated that a gas leak had caused the blast. The exact trigger for the explosion, however, remains to be determined.

'Always rely more on scientific evidence'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Special Court of Sessions for criminal cases against former/present MPs and MLAs which convicted former MP for Hassan, Prajwal Revanna, and sentenced him to life in prison for the remainder of his natural life, all in a year and four months since the case was registered, appreciated the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for its first-of-its-kind "scientific investigation".

B.K. Singh, a 1996-batch IPS officer, presently posted as the Additional Director General of Police, Criminal Investigation Department, headed the SIT and has led several key investigations against high-profile public figures in Karnataka.

Over the last eight years, he has led three SITs into the murders of editor-activist Gauri Lankesh, scholar M.M. Kalburgi, and, the crimes of Prajwal Revanna and MLA Munirathna.

B.K. Singh led the SIT investigation into the murder of editor-activist Gauri Lankesh.

In an exclusive interview with *The Hindu*, he shares insights into the case investigations.

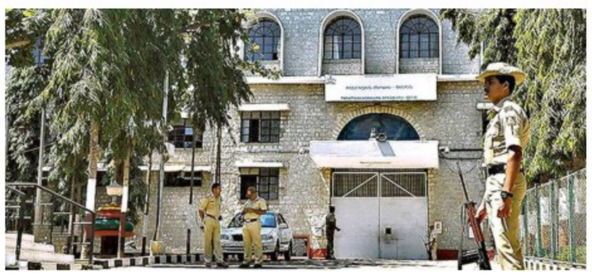
FULL INTERVIEW
» PAGE 6

Darshan, other accused kept in separate cells; two more accused sent to jail

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and the other accused, who were re-arrested on Thursday in connection with the Renukaswamy murder case after the Supreme Court cancelled their bail, are being held in the admission barracks in separate cells of Parappana Agrahara Central Prison.

The Supreme Court had warned of strict action if any special treatment is given to him after the previous episode. During his earlier stint in the Bengaluru Central Prison last year, a photograph surfaced showing Darshan hobnobbing with rowdy-sheeters Wilson Garden Naga and Srinivas and allegedly getting preferential treatment. The leaked image left prison authorities red-faced and led to Darshan's transfer to Ballari Prison. Southeast division police headed by DCP Sarah Fathiema are investigating the cases that followed the leaked picture.



Officials have now made extensive arrangements to securely house Darshan and his associates in the Parappana Agrahara jail complex.

A source told *The Hindu* that at they are preparing to file charge sheets in the cases. The city police followed up the development with surprise raids, uncovering multiple irregularities. Subsequently, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) moved the court and secured orders to transfer the rowdy sheeters to other prisons in the State.

These individuals had been detained under the Karnataka Control of Organised Crimes Act (KCOCA), the harshest law in the Karnataka Police statutes.

Given the history of irregularities at the central prison, officials have made extensive arrangements to securely house Darshan and his associates.

Meanwhile, two more accused in the murder case were remanded in Parappana Agrahara Central Prison on Friday. The police produced Jagadeesh alias Jagga (accused number 6) and Anu Kumar alias Anu (accused number 7) before a judge at his residence in southeastern Bengaluru on Friday, after which they were escorted to the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison. S. Girish, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), West, who is overseeing the developments, told *The Hindu* that both were arrested in Chitradurga. "They have been remanded in judicial custody until August 23 and will be produced before the court again on that date," Mr. Girish said.

RELATED REPORT ON
» PAGE 4

Yet again, talks for a global plastics treaty end in a stalemate

Jacob Koshy
GENEVA

Countries, for the second time since October 2024, failed to agree on a legally binding agreement to an ambitious treaty to end plastic pollution.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC 5.2), a group of about 180 countries, has been deliberating at the United Nations offices in Geneva since August 5 towards a consensus agreement. The process was to conclude on the August 14. However multiple draft versions of the text couldn't reconcile deep differences between blocs of nations on whether cutting plastic production was integral to ending plastic pollution.

A majority of the countries, about 80-100, back an "ambitious" treaty that, at its heart, has a phase-out plan for plastics.

As many as 57 countries called for toxic-free reuse, refill and repair systems; 89 demanded cuts to plastic production; 120 supported strong controls on chemicals; another 120 backed voting in the Conference of the Parties to break the deadlock and 130 championed a dedicated Article on health. Primarily led by the European Union and its 27 member states, the countries looking for an ambitious treaty include several countries in Africa, several Pacific Island states, countries in Latin America and Japan.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 11

One-year appraisal: has Gautam Gambhir's roller-coaster tenure found a tipping point?

Saddled with the task of managing a transition, the India coach has experienced soaring highs and crushing lows across formats. The Test tour of England, where a young side charged back into contention, might prove a watershed moment in the 43-year-old's stint

GETTY IMAGES

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

In the metamorphosis of cricketers, the way they are remembered becomes a product of recency bias. In their prime, Ravi Shastri and Navjot Singh Sidhu were gutsy players, but for the modern generation, they are just commentators. Shastri, though, has an added layer of being a former coach.

Equally, Gautam Gambhir has to deal with such quirks in public memory. The Indian cricket team's coach was an effective opener in his heyday, albeit over-shadowed by Virender Sehwag, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, V.V.S. Laxman and Sourav Ganguly.

Owning the big stage

Gambhir had his splendid days too, evident in his 436-ball 137 that secured a draw against New Zealand at Napier in 2009. And both in the 2007 ICC World Twenty20 and 2011 ICC World Cup finals, he was the top-scorer for a triumphant India. Deep inside, he still feels that he never got the credit, as skipper M.S. Dhoni gained the accolades.

The fiery southpaw had a slow descent as his form waned, but in the Indian Premier League, he led Kolkata Knight Riders to titles in 2012 and 2014. Having nursed captaincy ambitions at the highest level, perhaps the IPL forays helped to partially assuage that simmering angst.

The microscope trained on Gambhir then got coated with a political lens as he shifted to Parliament. He may have moved on from that phase, but in the perennial ideological churn seen in India, judgements on him are often influenced by the political underpinnings of the larger public.

These diverse strands of perception clung to him harder when he was appointed coach of the Indian team in July last year. He was also stepping into a space earlier occupied by Dravid and Shastri. Dravid, ever conscious about his public image, and Shastri, with years of commentary experience under his belt, knew how to position themselves.

It also helped that Shastri forged a bond with Virat Kohli, and Dravid found a kindred spirit in Rohit Sharma. A coach in synergy with the captain always helps, especially in Indian cricket, which had its horror phase when Greg Chappell and Ganguly had their falling-out.

As a player, he had the respect of his legendary peers. Now as coach, Gambhir is seeking permanence in Indian cricket's list of influential figures

Gambhir was saddled with the onerous task of shepherding a unit in the throes of transition, while also dealing with the larger-than-life aura around talisman Kohli and skipper Rohit. It was never easy. Old videos of his run-in with Kohli in a heated IPL clash resurfaced, but the two handled the issue well. This was the cynical universe Gambhir stepped into, with a thinking hat and a lingering scowl.

As a year at the helm ends, Gambhir has had a roller-coaster ride at the top. In his initial days as national coach, India won the T20I series in Sri Lanka 3-0, but lost the subsequent ODI jousts 0-2. It was also a tour that revealed the diverse paths that India would traverse even within the blue shade but split between ODIs and T20Is.

Suryakumar Yadav led in T20Is and Rohit was the captain in ODIs. Gambhir had to recalibrate his communication lines. Back home, the coach found easy pickings in the Tests against Bangladesh and a 2-0 victory was etched. But the knives were sharpened when host India lost 0-3 in the Tests against New Zealand.

The old dirge about Indian cricket being on a downward spiral played out. Gambhir's role and his judgement of pitches were questioned. India may have this image of being a fortress at home, but there have been occasions in the past when visiting sides have emerged on top. Yet, in this age of toxic social media and emotional television anchors, neutrality and nuance are vanishing traits.

Whispers of unease

Even as ODIs and T20Is were won, the next big hurdle was the tour of Australia. By then, whispers of unease between Test leader Rohit and Gambhir had surfaced. There was mutual respect and both had played together for India in the past, but just like Kohli missed Shastri, Rohit felt Dravid's absence.

Meanwhile, Gambhir was trying to forge a squad that reflected his persona. Expending every ounce of energy on the field, verbal skirmishes on and off it, and sharp words for the media became par for the course. Still, India lost the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 1-3, and this after starting its campaign well.

It was a tour that brought the curtains down on three storied careers. A trip Down Under does that at times as Dilip Vengsarkar, Dravid and Laxman would testify. As the 2024-25 series progressed, R. Ashwin announced his retirement. After the dust seemed to settle, it was Rohit's turn, with the captain dropping himself for the final Test. It was a matter of time before he announced his retirement from Tests; and Kohli followed suit.

Gambhir, prone to holding all the cards close to his chest, had insisted that the best playing eleven would take the field ahead of that last game in Sydney. And as Rohit made way for Jasprit Bumrah to lead again, the winds of transition were clear.

Sunshine moments

The coach has had his sunshine moments too, when in the ODIs, a resurgent Rohit guided India to a title win in the ICC Champions Trophy final against New Zealand at Dubai in March.

Even as Gambhir sought to carve his own path, the iconic status bequeathed to Kohli and Rohit was a factor he had to accept. But once the duo quit Tests, finally the coach had a bunch of players on whom he could leave an imprint, as India flew to the Old Blighty.

It also helped that expectations around the side, led by Shubman Gill, were a notch low. But when the tour concluded on August 4 at a raucous Oval, India had charged back to level the series 2-2. This could well be the tipping point for Gambhir, the coach. The shadows of Kohli, Rohit and Ashwin are no longer there even if the first two are still available for ODIs.

In Gill, K.L. Rahul, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rishabh Pant, Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj, the coach has a fine nucleus in Tests.

Even as Gambhir sought to carve his own path, he had to accept the iconic status bequeathed to Kohli and Rohit. But once the duo quit Tests, he had a squad on whom he could leave an imprint

Gambhir's anger-management remains a festering issue as obvious in his tiff with the Oval curator Lee Fortis. But this is how he is, like Steve Waugh, preferring the entire world to be against him. With his back to the wall, Gambhir springs forward. His team did the same through the England tour. And he does smile too, a rare sliver of joy on an otherwise grim visage.

As a player, he had the respect of his legendary peers. Now as coach, Gambhir is seeking permanence in Indian cricket's list of influential figures. He has a long road ahead and, as he prefers battle metaphors, surely the angry warrior in him is wide awake.

STACKING UP

ATP Men's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Jannik Sinner	23	12,030	18
2	Carlos Alcaraz	22	8,590	21
3	Alexander Zverev	28	6,380	24
4	Taylor Fritz	27	5,525	23
5	Jack Draper	23	4,650	18
6	Ben Shelton	22	4,320	24
7	Novak Djokovic	38	4,130	20
8	Alex de Minaur	26	3,480	24
9	Holger Rune	22	3,340	23
10	Lorenzo Musetti	23	3,235	21
11	Andrey Rublev	27	3,210	29
12	Karen Khachanov	29	3,190	26
13	Casper Ruud	26	2,995	24
14	Frances Tiafoe	27	2,890	25
15	Daniil Medvedev	29	2,760	23

Top Indians ▶

Sumit Nagal
Rank 302 ▲ 5 spots

Karan Singh
Rank 388 ▼ 13 spots

WTA Women's Top 15

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	27	12,010	18
2	Coco Gauff	21	7,669	19
3	Iga Swiatek	24	6,933	16
4	Jessica Pegula	31	5,488	22
5	Mirra Andreeva	18	4,948	19
6	Madison Keys	30	4,579	19
7	Qinwen Zheng	22	4,553	18
8	Amanda Anisimova	23	3,834	21
9	Jasmine Paolini	29	3,586	19
10	Elena Rybakina	26	3,283	21
11	Emma Navarro	24	3,095	26
12	Paula Badosa	27	2,954	21
13	Elina Svitolina	30	2,944	16
14	Karolina Muchova	28	2,838	16
15	Clara Tauson	22	2,726	25

Top Indians ▶

Shrivalli Bhamidipaty
Rank 340 ▼ 23 spots

Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 350 ▼ 2 spots

F1 Drivers' standings

#	Driver	Team	Points	Wins
1	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	284	6
2	Lando Norris	McLaren	275	5
3	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	187	2
4	George Russell	Mercedes	172	1
5	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	151	0
6	Lewis Hamilton	Ferrari	109	0
7	Kimi Antonelli	Mercedes	64	0
8	Alexander Albon	Williams	54	0
9	Nico Hulkenberg	Sauber	37	0
10	Esteban Ocon	Haas	27	0
11	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	26	0
12	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	26	0
13	Isack Hadjar	Racing Bulls	22	0
14	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	20	0
15	Liam Lawson	Racing Bulls	20	0
16	Carlos Sainz	Williams	16	0
17	Gabriel Bortoleto	Sauber	14	0
18	Yuki Tsunoda	Red Bull	10	0
19	Oliver Bearman	Haas	8	0
20	Franco Colapinto	Alpine	0	0

Oscar Piastri

Lando Norris

F1 Constructors' standings

Pos	Team	Points	Wins
1	McLaren	559	11
2	Ferrari	260	0
3	Mercedes	236	1
4	Red Bull	194	2
5	Williams	70	0
6	Aston Martin	52	0
7	Kick Sauber	51	0
8	RB	45	0
9	Haas	35	0
10	Alpine	20	0

Badminton Men's ranking

#	Player	Points	Events
1	Shi Yu Qi	1,02,317	12
2	Anders Antonsen	93,153	16
3	Kunlavut Vitidsarn	89,179	18
4	Li Shi Feng	81,078	18
5	Jonatan Christie	76,514	16
6	Chou Tien Chen	75,469	23
7	Alex Lanier	67,821	15
8	Kodai Naraoka	64,134	19
9	Loh Kean Yew	63,319	16
10	Christo Popov	62,217	18
11	Lu Guang Zu	61,860	18
12	Lin Chun-Yi	57,340	16
13	Lee Cheuk Yiu	56,642	19
14	Kenta Nishimoto	56,292	22
15	Toma Junior Popov	55,051	18

Top Indians ▶

Lakshya Sen
Rank 21

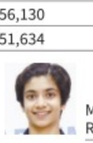
Ayush Shetty
Rank 32

Badminton Women's ranking

#	Player	Points	Events
1	An Se Young	1,10,120	12
2	Wang Zhi Yi	1,06,862	17
3	Han Yue	91,000	17
4	Chen Yu Fei	82,385	12
5	Akane Yamaguchi	81,284	13
6	Pornpawee Chochuwong	69,708	20
7	Gregoria Mariska Tunjung	65,960	13
8	Tomoka Miyazaki	65,364	21
9	Putri Kusuma Wardani	63,600	18
10	Ratchanok Intanon	62,464	18
11	Supanida Katethong	60,527	13
12	Sim Yu Jin	58,309	16
13	Yeo Jia Min	57,543	15
14	Gao Fang Jie	56,130	12
15	P.V. Sindhu	51,634	16

Top Indians ▶

P.V. Sindhu
Rank 15



Malvika Bansod
Rank 29

Test Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Joe Root	908	932
2	Harry Brook	868	898
3	Kane Williamson	858	919
4	Steve Smith	816	947
5	Yashasvi Jaiswal	792	858
6	Temba Bavuma	790	806
7	Kamindu Mendis	781	784
8	Rishabh Pant	768	801
9	Daryl Mitchell	748	807
10	Ben Duckett	747	787

Test Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Jasprit Bumrah	889	908
2	Kagiso Rabada	851	902
3	Matt Henry	846	846
4	Pat Cummins	838	914
5	Josh Hazlewood	815	864
6	Noman Ali	806	806
7	Scott Boland	784	784
8	Nathan Lyon	769	812
9	Marco Jansen	767	803
10	Mitchell Starc	766	807

ODI Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Shubman Gill	784	847
2	Rohit Sharma	756	882
3	Babar Azam	751	898
4	Virat Kohli	736	909
5	Daryl Mitchell	720	751
6	Charith Asalanka	719	725
7	Harry Tector	708	767
8	Shreyas Iyer	704	710
9	Ibrahim Zadran	676	693
10	Kusal Mendis	669	802

ODI Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Maheesh Theekshana	671	686
2	Kuldeep Yadav	650	761
3	Keshav Maharaj	648	741
4	Bernard Scholtz	644	648
5	Rashid Khan	640	799
6	Mitchell Santner	637	657
7	Matt Henry	622	691
8	Wanindu Hasaranga	619	619
9	Ravindra Jadeja	616	733
10	Adam Zampa	614	699

T20I Batting

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Abhishek Sharma	829	829
2	Tilak Varma	804	845
3	Philip Salt	791	881
4	Travis Head	782	885
5	Jos Buttler	772	774
6	Suryakumar Yadav	739	912
7	Pathum Nissanka	736	736
8	Tim Seifert	725	727
9	Josh Inglis	690	781
10	Tim David	680	680

T20I Bowling

#	Player	Rating	Career best
1	Jacob Duffy	717	723
2	Adil Rashid	710	747
3	Akeal Hosein	707	714
4	Varun Chakravarthy	706	706
5	Adam Zampa	686	746
6	Wanindu Hasaranga	679	809
7	Ravi Bishnoi	674	707
8	Rashid Khan	664	828
8	Arshdeep Singh	653	679
10	Maheesh Theekshana	652	686

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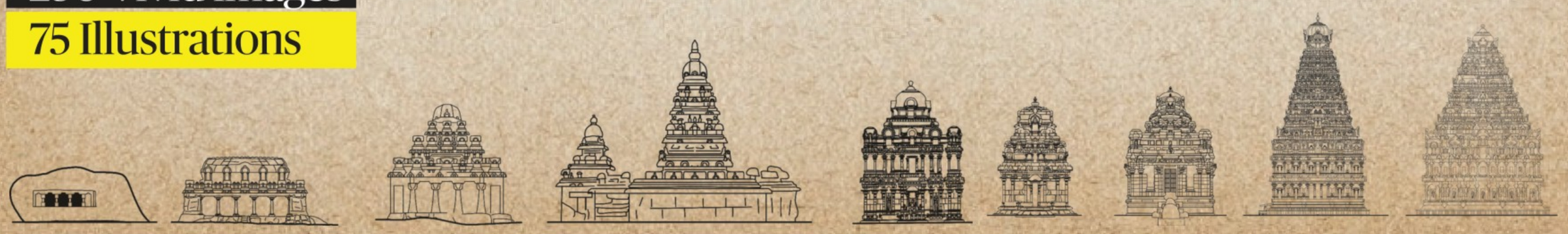

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‘We thought it was a bomb blast and were shaking like a leaf’

While the count of injured stands at nine, the blast could have been far more devastating, as it occurred in a cluster of 17 houses – each no larger than 10 feet by 10 feet, occupied by 60 residents

Chetan B.C.
BENGALURU

“Mubarak and Fathima both cried for help in front of me as debris covered them, wailing in pain. I couldn’t clear the pile because it was too much,” recalled Abdul Lathif, cousin of Mubarak and Fathima. Mubarak, 10, lost his life, while Fathima, 8, was seriously injured in the blast caused by a suspected cylinder leak in Adugodi, southeastern Bengaluru, on Friday.

Shattered: Several houses were damaged in an explosion that ripped through closely packed dwellings in Adugodi in Bengaluru on Friday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

Lathif said that about ten people managed to remove the debris that had fallen on his cousins and rushed them to hospital. About half an hour later, he received a call from his father informing him that Mubarak had died.

The blast also left eight others injured, including an eight-year-old boy, who is in a critical condition, receiving treatment in the ICU and fighting for his life. The other injured have been identified as Kasturamma, Sarasamma, Shabrina Banu, Subramani, Sheikh Najeeb Ulla, Pramila, and Rajesh.

While the count of injured stands at nine, the blast could have been far more devastating, as it occurred in a cluster of 17 houses, each no larger than 10 feet by 10 feet, occupied by 60 residents. The settlement is compact, with just three narrow exit lanes, each less than three feet wide. “We have lived here for almost 50 years, and nothing like this has ever happened,” said Harish Kumar, son of Subramani, one of the injured.

The blast occurred around 8.10 a.m. .

Mr. Kumar said his mother was about to take a bath and entered the bathroom when the blast ripped through the building. “She only remembers a loud thud and the top sheet falling on her head. She fell unconscious,” Kumar told *The Hindu*.

Sheikh, a painter by profession, recalled that he ran for his life through the lane at the back of the cluster.

“Glass shattered, and I saw the roof collapsing. I panicked and ran,” he said, showing cuts on his legs from the broken glass as he fled. “It sounded like a bomb blast, and we were frightened and nervous,” Sheikh added. Initially, every one believed it was some kind of an explosion.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh did not provide clarity at first, saying it was too early to comment. By then, it was already 12.30 p.m. Panic gripped the neighbourhood and intensified when Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arrived at the scene, fuelling further speculation. “Sir, the Chief Minister is here, this must be serious, right?” asked Najeeb, a bystander watching the Chief Minister’s arrival.

Before his visit, the canine squad, bomb disposal squad, State Disaster Response Force, Garuda Force, and Internal Security Division had all arrived at the site to inspect the area. By evening, however, the Police Commissioner confirmed that the blast had been caused by an LPG cylinder leak.

‘No explosive chemical’

The Forensic Science Laboratory team, bomb squad, and Scene of Crime Officers (SOCO) collected samples from the blast site. Tests confirmed that no explosive chemicals were present, ruling out any deliberate act. The police, however, said they would conduct further checks once all the debris is cleared. For now, the affected families have been moved to temporary shelters, and the BBMP has announced that their houses will be reconstructed.

One of 9 injured critical

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The condition of one of the nine injured in Friday’s cylinder blast was said to be critical.

Doctors at the Mahabodhi Burns Care Centre, on the premises of State-run Victoria Hospital, said an eight-year-old child has suffered 45% burns, apart from respiratory tract burns.

The child’s mother, Kasturiamma, has suffered 35% burns, along with inhalation burns, and both of them were being monitored in the ICU, said Yogeshwarappa C.N., Head of the Department of Plastic Surgery and Burns at the hospital.

“We are evaluating the child for a head injury. We are closely monitoring them as both of them have suffered inhalation burns,” the doctor said.

Apart from these two, three injured persons are under treatment at the State-run Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Trauma and Orthopaedics. Of the three, a 60-year-old woman, Sarasamma, has suffered severe crush injuries in her right arm. Doctors said her right hand had to be amputated above the elbow as her blood vessels were damaged and badly contaminated. “The injuries were so severe that even reconstruction would not have helped,” said Madan Ballal, director of the institute.

“The other two - a 40-year-old woman and a 38-year-old man - have suffered minor ear injuries and a head concussion,” Dr. Ballal said.

The remaining four have suffered minor injuries and one of them was seen in the Emergency at NIMHANS. “He did not require admission as he had minor injuries,” said Resident Medical Officer H.N. Shashidhara.

Leopard injures 12-year-old boy at BBP

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 12-year-old boy was clawed by a leopard at the Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) on Friday.

The boy, while travelling in a safari bus, had placed his hand in an accessible place near a window and was clawed by a leopard which had reportedly climbed on the bus.

“The boy was injured during a non-AC bus leopard safari trip at the BBP. The leopard, while climbing up the bus, clawed the boy’s hand which was placed in an accessible place,” said A.V. Surya Sen, Executive Director, BBP.

“He was given first aid and was checked for other injuries. Precautions are taken for proper covering of all the windows using mesh, including camera slots, and strict instructions are given to drivers operating non-AC bus safaris,” Mr. Sen said.

He said that it was common for leopards to leap on the safari buses and grasp on the window mesh.

J.C. Road braces for gridlock as BBMP prepares to begin milling works

Chetan B.C.
BENGALURU

The ongoing white-topping work by BBMP on J.C. Road in Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

Commuters who regularly use central Bengaluru’s J.C. Road can expect a more dreadful travelling experience as the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) prepares to begin milling works by partially closing the 1.5-km stretch for traffic.

Preliminary preparations for white-topping are nearing completion, while the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board’s (BWSSB) storm-water drain works are still in progress. Within a week, the BBMP will start milling (removing the existing concrete), restricting vehicular movement to half, a BBMP official overseeing the project told *The Hindu*.

Even before this phase begins, traffic on the stretch has slowed to a crawl during peak hours. The 1.3-km route from Minerva Circle to Town Hall Junction, normally covered in six to ten minutes depending on congestion on connecting roads, now takes at least 15 minutes for two-wheelers and 20 minutes for other vehicles.

Motorists taking J.C. Road encounter thick clouds of dust, heavy machinery at work, heaps of excavated mud, and unrelenting honking. With the monsoon intensifying, the road on either side has turned to slush, further narrowing the usable road space.

“All commuters, especially in the mornings while heading to work, are on the edge, and the smallest trigger can lead to unpleasant exchanges. It is rare to travel on this road and not witness a quarrel,” said Prakash Mane, a resident of Basavanagudi, who compared driving on the stretch to “walking on eggshells”.

A senior traffic police officer described J.C. Road as one of Bengaluru’s busiest and most critical link roads. Any alteration to traffic flow here inevitably disrupts traffic on surrounding arterial roads.

The stretch serves as a key route for officegoers from southern and southeastern Bengaluru heading to central areas such as Majestic and Chamarajpet, and further north. It is also an alternative route for commuters from southwestern neighbourhoods like Rajarajeshwari Nagar who travel to the city centre.

Once partially closed, Kengal Hanumanthaiah (K.H.) Road, which runs parallel to J.C. Road, is expected to bear the brunt of diverted traffic, particularly from commuters heading towards Majestic from the NIMHANS area. This could turn K.H. Circle into a choke point, with spillover congestion likely on Siddapura Road, Marigowda Road, and Siddaiah Road.

Despite the stretch’s significance, the BBMP has already missed earlier deadlines. Initially slated for completion by March-end, the project was pushed to May-end to avoid leaving work half-finished during the monsoon.

Scheduled to begin in December 2024, it only started in February. Since then, both the BBMP and BWSSB have changed executive engineers overseeing the work.

The BBMP official acknowledged the delay, partly attributing it to an unexpected obstacle. “On the left side of the road heading towards Town Hall, we encountered a massive hard rock while digging. The rock extended for about 200 metres, and breaking it was a major challenge,” he said, also citing ongoing traffic and other civic works for the delay.

The current deadline for completion is December, though with the monsoon worsening, this appears difficult. However, the BBMP maintains it can finish J.C. Road’s makeover within the timeframe.

White-topping J.C. Road is part of a package of five projects in the vicinity, including roads in N.R. Colony, Basavanagudi, and K.H. Road. The traffic police have not approved work on K.H. Road, citing its potential to severely disrupt traffic in the area if taken up simultaneously with J.C. Road.

The package involves full road overhauls, with new storm-water drains, ducts for BWSSB and BESCOM, light poles, and white-topped surfaces. The BBMP’s target for completing all five projects is March 2026, but with no work yet on K.H. Road that deadline also appears unrealistic.

EV battery swapping centre being opened at the Bescom corporate office in Bengaluru on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

EV battery swapping centre opened at Bescom office

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A battery swapping centre was inaugurated at the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) corporate office on Friday to enhance electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure.

‘Significant milestone’

Shivashankar, Managing Director of Bescom, said, “The launch of the centre is a significant milestone in delivering fast, reliable, and accessible EV services to users in Bengaluru”.

“The facility has been set up in partnership with IndoFast Energy, which currently operates over 250 battery swapping centres,” Mr. Shivashankar said.

The discharged batteries in the electric vehicles can be swapped for fully charged ones within two minutes at the centre.

Timings
BENGALURU

SATURDAY, AUG. 16	
RISE 06:08	SET 18:40
RISE 00:00	SET 12:26
SUNDAY, AUG. 17	
RISE 06:08	SET 18:39
RISE 00:07	SET 13:30
MONDAY, AUG. 18	
RISE 06:08	SET 18:39
RISE 01:04	SET 14:33

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	29	24
Mysuru	27	19
Bengaluru	27	19

Bengaluru Today
26°C The weather will be comfortable. Night will be pleasant. Spell of light to moderate rain and thundershower to occur.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
27°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be comfortable. Spell of light rain and thundershower will occur.

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THE HINDU
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Spiritual leader laid to rest

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

Sharanabaswappa Appa, the eighth Mahadasoha Peetadhipathi of the Sharanabasaveshwara Samsthan, who passed away on Thursday, was laid to rest here on Friday. The burial took place with state honours.

Spotlight
Read longform articles from our regional editions

- **Andhra Pradesh:** When water scorches the earth **newsth.live/Godavariwaters**
- **Delhi/Mumbai:** ITeS not so simple any more **newsth.live/ITeS**
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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my client **M/s.OPERA DEVELOPERS,** represented by its Partners, **Mr.KARTHIK and Mr.NIKHIL MANVI,** intends to undertake the Joint Development of the immovable property described in the schedule hereunder from its owner, **Mr.Mohammed Amin Mohammed Meeran Saifulla.** Any person/s having any claim, title and interest over the schedule property or any objections to the proposed Joint Development, may file their objections in writing along with copies of supporting documents to the undersigned within **15 days** from the date of this publication and a copy of objections to our below mentioned office, failing which my client will be advised to go ahead and complete the formalities for registered Joint Development Agreement.

:: SCHEDULE ::

Item No.1: All that piece and parcel of the residential converted Property bearing **Site No.1,** comprised in Sy.No.12/2, House List No.609/29, measuring East to West (58+62)/2 feet, North to South 90 feet, totally measuring 5400 square feet, situated at **Yelenahalli Village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore** bounded on : **East by : Private Property, West by : Site No.2, North by : Private Property, South by : Road**

Item No.2: All that piece and parcel of the vacant Property bearing **Site No.2,** Old Katha No.12/2, BBMP Katha No.105/39/12/2/2, formed out Sy.No.12/2, measuring East to West 50 feet, North to South 90 feet, totally measuring 4500 square feet, situated at **Yelenahalli Village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore** bounded on : **East by : Site No.1, West by : Site No.3, North by : Private Land, South by: Road.**

Sahai Kumar, Advocate,
311, 2nd Floor, 3rd Main, 3rd Phase, J.P. Nagar, Bangalore-560 078
Call : 9845090974

PUBLIC NOTICE (LOST DOCUMENT)

Public are informed that, my client **Mrs. Geetha Shree G, C/o. Mr. Arun Gopal G,** Aadhar No. **704750405276**, aged about 29 years, R/at. LIC Building, 7th Cross, Araleri Road, Adarsh Nagar, Malur-563130, also R/at No.98, I Main Road, Opp. Anjeneya Temple, Krishna Palya, Bangalore North, Bangalore-560038, is the absolute owner in respect of All that piece and parcel of the property bearing **Site No.83,** V.P. Khatha No. 506/53, **PID No. 151900801800220450,** measuring **East to West 12.19 meters or 40 feet and North to South 9.14 meters or 30 feet**, carved out of Converted land bearing i). Old Sy No. 10/p16, new Sy No.104/1 and 104/2, in the residential Layout known as **“Prerana Greens”** situated at **Byranahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Malur Taluk, Kolar District** and bounded on **East by: Site No. 68, West by : Road, North by: Site No.52, South by: Site No.54,** affirms that the original Sale deed dated 28.12.2023-24 executed by **Sri. Bhanji Karsan Patel and others** represented by their SPA Holder **Sri. Chandramowly. B in favour of Sri. S. Nagaraja** and duly registered as document No. MLR-1-08800/2023-24, of Book-01, registered before the office of the Sub-registrar, Malur, belongs to our Customer **Mrs. Geetha Shree G** has been lost/misplaced by my client and police complaint has been also lodged on **12.08.2025** to this effect.

Any person/s are in possession of the aforesaid original documents may return the same to under mentioned Advocate or anyone having any claim over the said property or any other claims by any person/s Nationalized banks, MNC Banks Private Banks, Co-Operative Banks any Financial institutions Governed by the RBI Rules may lodge their objections in writing within **15 days** from this day to the under mentioned Advocate.

S.SHABEER, Advocate,
S.S. Law Associates & Legal Consultants
No.12A, I Floor, HHS & HMS Complex, Cubbonpet Main Road, Bangalore -560 002

PUBLIC NOTICE
PURCHASE OF PROPERTY

Our Client, Mr. Mahaveer Kumar Jain, S/o Ladu Lal and Mrs. Aruna Devi W/o Mahaveer Kumar Jain, residing at No. 22/46, New - 239, Bhuvaneshwari Nagar, Bangalore South, Hosakerehalli, Bangalore - 560085, is intending to purchase a residential property from Smt. M S Pushpa Prakash W/o Late V Jaya Prakash, and the schedule of the property is to be read as below.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Municpal No.1, 7th Main Road, Cauvery Nagar, kathriguppe, Uttarahalli Hobli, Kathriguppe Village, Bangalore South Taluk, having EPID No. 4165023670, Property bearing No. 18, ward no. 163, consisting of G + 4 Building structure, and site measuring East to west : 45 ft and North to South : 30 ft totally measuring 1350 sq ft and bounded as under:

East by : Property bearing No. 15
West by : 20 feet Road
North by : Property bearing No. 17
South by : Property bearing No. 19

In this context there is an agreement executed between the parties on 13.08.2025 between the parties, however if there are any objections, clogs, or disputes any such towards the above mentioned schedule, the same should be produced to the undersigned Council within 7 days from the date of publication of the notice.

16th August, 2025
Bangalore

Radha S, Advocate
RS Law Chambers
Advocate and Legal Consultant
Chamber No. 81, Indrashree, 2nd Main, Anjaneya nagar, BSK 3rd stage
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The stories are there in doubles, too — they just need to be told

Rajeev Ram has had a fascinating life in tennis. The 41-year-old Indian-American has won doubles Majors and Olympic medals, playing with and against some of the world's best. In this conversation, he discusses his longevity, doubles' evolution, how the sport can market the pairs format better and the US Open's mixed doubles gambit

GETTY IMAGES

INTERVIEW

Rajeev Ram

N. Sudarshan

For Indian tennis fans, Rajeev Ram at once seems a close cousin and a distant relative. The 41-year-old's parents were from India and his biggest doubles successes – Australian Open 2020 and a hat-trick of US Opens from 2021 to 2023 – have resonated in the sub-continent.

But he is also proudly American, and is mentoring the next generation there. He sat courtside as fellow Indian-American Nishesh Basavareddy, then 19, took on Novak Djokovic in the first-round of the 2025 Australian Open.

The six-time Grand Slam champion and two-time Olympic medallist spoke to *The Hindu* on his experiences in a sport he cares deeply about. *Excerpts:*

How do you assess your year so far?

In professional sport, it's a lot of up and down. My results haven't been what I've gotten used to over the last few years. But I'm 41 and have been very fortunate to have played at a pretty high level for the better part of 20 years. So, I'm taking it in my stride. The US Open is my favourite tournament, so I am really looking forward [to it].

What has kept you going for so long?

I played singles as a priority until 2017. We, as tennis players, begin with aspirations to play at the top level in singles. I'm very proud of the fact that I became a top-60 player and won two titles on the Tour. My doubles-only career started in 2017, and even though it was much after I turned pro, it still was fresh when Joe [Salisbury] and I won the Australian Open in 2020.

It's a lot about attitude. The thing that's always been important is consistently trying to improve. If you have that attitude, you can sometimes take even losses as a positive. As heartbreaking as some of them are, sometimes they're the biggest motivators. I used them as fire and fuel. I've actually had to be more aware of myself when I've been winning a lot because you get a little bit satisfied.

How has the doubles game evolved?

It's changed a lot. When I started, players, especially those who transitioned from singles, would try to develop their net game a bit more. In the last three or four years, I've seen a big shift where that's really not the case. Most teams now have at least one player who serves and stays back all the time. There's more comfort from the baseline. A lot of the players don't really worry about serving and volleying anymore. From the returner's perspective, it's a lot more about pace, being aggressive and trying to get a hold on the point straight away. Whereas, when I started playing, there was a little bit more feel, more finesse.

> I applaud [the US Open's] idea to innovate. Tennis could use mixed doubles as the flag-bearer. But they made it such that doubles players couldn't even enter. That's where I feel opposed

> As heartbreaking as some of them are, sometimes losses are the biggest motivators. I used them as fire and fuel

Doubles is very entertaining and popular as a recreational sport. But it doesn't get good broadcast slots or show-court scheduling, especially in a Major's first week. Are these hindering its growth?

Absolutely. Anything that is put on the back-burner in terms of promotion and marketing is going to be treated that way by people who watch it. I'm not saying by any stretch that it needs to be at the same level as singles. But there are definitely stories that could be marketed a lot more. Like Rohan [Bopanna] having so much success at such a late age [World No. 1 and Australian Open title in 2024]. Croatia's Mate Pavic won the French Open last year and completed the career Golden Slam. But I don't think it got the push that a truly rare achievement in our sport should have got. Next is to highlight the partnerships. There could be quite a bit more of that, just to get to know the players at the personal level.

In such a scenario, how does the move by the US Open to completely transform its mixed doubles feel? It is being played in the week before the Slam and has more singles players than doubles.

It's two parts for me. I applaud their idea to innovate. As much as doubles was on the back-burner, mixed doubles was behind even more. So putting it in its own week, with fanfare, is great. Tennis could use mixed doubles as the flag-bearer, as men and women play men and women for Olympic medals and Grand Slam titles.

But they [US Open] made it such that doubles players couldn't even enter. You can't unless you have a singles ranking. That's where I feel opposed. They should [have] just let everybody enter. A lot of the players that got in from singles would have still gotten in. It would have been a bit more legitimate to give a Grand Slam trophy for.

If you were in a position of power, what would you do to increase traction for doubles?

I mentioned Rohan winning so late. Joe and I won three US Opens on the trot. So the stories are there. They just need to be told. Secondly, social media is such a big part of our world. We have exciting points happening every day. They don't need to be necessarily in the main stadiums or even on TV. If we could do a better job of showcasing them, people would be drawn to the game. Most of those who are watching are doubles players themselves and they can have a little bit of a relationship there. The third thing is to just tell the story of the partnerships. Joe and I played together for six years. We can do a little bit more of getting outside tennis and highlighting the personalities.

You have been mentoring Nishesh. What do you think India can do to develop such a player?

I wish there was some magic recipe. Nishesh and I... our relationship is unique. Of all the places in the US, he moved to the little town that I'm from [Carmel, Indiana]. We have the same coach, Bryan Smith, and I have to give him a lot of credit. He not only teaches us to be good tennis players, but also teaches us to give back to the next group. It was always something I was going to do for him [Nishesh] and a few others. Also, coming from the exact same background as I have, an America-born kid with Indian heritage... a lot of pieces came together.

What India can do... I think it is very important for a player to feel that he or she is not alone and not feel like they have to reach a certain level for it to be successful. Just the effort of trying to be the best you can be is success in itself. I was really lucky that my dad had the foresight to realise that in the US, sports can actually open doors. I would have never gone to the colleges that I went to if I wasn't a tennis player. So, maybe, just a slight shift in mentality for what it really means to be a high-level athlete and what success really is [can help India].

GAME THEORY

The US Open's greatest women's champions

With the year's fourth and final tennis Major, the US Open, set to begin next weekend, we take a look at the women with the most singles titles in the tournament's history. The first women's edition was staged in 1887. The tournament was limited to amateurs until 1968, when the Open Era began and professionals were allowed in

Molla Mallory

Helen Wills

Chris Evert

Serena Williams

Steffi Graf

MOST SINGLES TITLES

Player	Titles	Years
Molla Mallory	8	1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1926
Helen Wills	7	1923, 1924, 1925, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1931
Chris Evert	6	1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982
Serena Williams	6	1999, 2002, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014
Margaret Court	5	1962, 1965, 1969, 1970, 1973
Steffi Graf	5	1988, 1989, 1993, 1995, 1996
Elisabeth Moore	4	1896, 1901, 1903, 1905
Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman	4	1909, 1910, 1911, 1919
Helen Jacobs	4	1932, 1933, 1934, 1935
Alice Marble	4	1936, 1938, 1939, 1940
Pauline Betz	4	1942, 1943, 1944, 1946
Maria Bueno	4	1959, 1963, 1964, 1966
Billie Jean King	4	1967, 1971, 1972, 1974
Martina Navratilova	4	1983, 1984, 1986, 1987
Juliette Atkinson	3	1895, 1897, 1898
Mary Browne	3	1912, 1913, 1914
Margaret Osborne duPont	3	1948, 1949, 1950
Maureen Connolly	3	1951, 1952, 1953
Kim Clijsters	3	2005, 2009, 2010

SOURCE: US OPEN

PICTURE THIS

GETTY IMAGES

Ice-capade

In this photograph, a paraglider enjoys a bird's-eye view of the Mont Blanc Massif mountain range, backdropped by the Bossons Glacier, in the French Alps.

Paragliding is a recreational and competitive adventure sport that involves the flying and manoeuvring of paragliders, which are light, free-flying glider aircraft with no rigid primary structure. The pilot is suspended below a fabric wing in a harness.

The shape of the wing — made with high-quality non-porous materials such as ripstop nylon — is controlled by the suspension cords, the pressure of air entering the front vents, and the forces produced by air flowing over the wing.

Both the launching and landing of paragliders are done against the wind's direction. Pilots launch themselves by running or being pulled, effectively positioning the wing into a strong airstream. This lifts the pilot off the ground, beginning the flight phase.

Paraglider flights can last long hours and span large distances. Cross-country flying and aerobatic events are two of the sport's most common competitive disciplines.

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M BG-BGE

State economy is robust, bolstered by guarantees: CM

Siddaramaiah says that his government's guarantee schemes are 'transforming the trajectory of Karnataka's development'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid criticism by the opposition BJP and JD(S) that guarantee schemes had rendered Karnataka 'bankrupt', Chief Minister Siddaramaiah sought to argue in his Independence Day address that the State's economy was robust, bolstered by its welfare schemes. This, he underlined, was despite "facing discrimination in distribution of resources from the Centre".

Delivering the Independence Day address at the Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw Parade Ground in Bengaluru on Friday, the Chief Minister said the State ranked first in the country in per capita income. Over the past decade, the State had achieved a growth of 101% in this indicator, from ₹1,01,858 at constant prices in 2013-14 to ₹2,04,605 in 2024-25.

Countering the argument that capital expenditure had taken a back seat owing to guarantees, he said, "This year, we have allocated ₹83,200 crore for capital expenditure. Karnataka is among the leading States, with 20.1% of its budget dedicated to infrastructure development."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inspecting the guard of honour at the 79th Independence Day celebrations at the Field Marshal Manekshaw parade ground in Bengaluru on Friday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

'Committed to caste census'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the decision to conduct a social and educational survey of the backward classes through the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission was taken to understand people's living conditions. "Only accurate data can shape policies that transform lives and future schemes, which can provide special representation and targeted justice. To ignore this would be to betray both our Constitution. Hence, our government is serious about internal reservation within the Scheduled Castes and conducting a socio-educational survey of the backward classes," he said.

(Clockwise from top left) Performances being staged as part of the 79th Independence Day celebrations at the Field Marshal Manekshaw parade ground in Bengaluru on Friday; participants at the celebrations; people taking pictures of the floral replica of Kittur fort at Lalbagh Botanical Garden, and a woman cuddling her child as she sells flags in front of the Vidhana Soudha. SUDHAKARA JAIN, ALLEN EGENUSE J. AND PTI

Impact of good rains
The Chief Minister argued that Karnataka focused on both agriculture and industry. He said that bountiful rains this year had helped in augmenting agricultural production. "In 2024-25, we have broken all previous records in agricultural and horticultural output," he said.

Pointing out that the previous government sought to privatise APMCs, Mr. Siddaramaiah said, "In contrast, our government strengthened APMCs, resulting in record arrivals of 164 lakh tonnes of agricultural products in 2024-25, a remarkable increase of 447%. This is the highest in the history of Karnataka's APMC." The government had allocated ₹51,339 crore for agriculture in the 2025-26 budget, an increase of 52.34% compared to 2022-23. Listing out measures for the industrial and tourism sectors, the Chief Minister said 18 industrial areas covering 44,166 acres had been declared Special Investment Regions. "Investors have expressed interest in bringing in over ₹10 lakh crore in investments. Out of this, 48% has already been processed under Single Window IT Platform. Karnataka remains among the nation's leading industrial States, with the manufacturing sector contributing 23.6% to the State's GSDP, and our State ranks second nationally in foreign direct investment," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

On the other hand, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that his government's guarantee schemes were "transforming the trajectory of Karnataka's development."

"Surveys by leading national institutions reveal a stark truth: the wealthiest 10% of our population hold 80% of the nation's wealth, yet they contribute only about 3% of the GST collected. The remaining 90% ordinary people, who work daily for food and clothing, shoulder nearly 97% of GST payments. How can any economy sustain itself under such circumstances? It is with the intention of finding answers to these very questions that we launched the guarantee schemes and other welfare programmes. Our government is spending over ₹1.12 lakh crore on welfare measures," he said.

"The ideology of Manuvad asserts that only the powerful should thrive while the rest remain as labourers and subordinates, an idea similar to Social Darwinism. In contrast, our Constitution stands firmly for Samvidhanvad, the principle that the weakest and most vulnerable must receive priority," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

City sees I-Day celebrations in tricolour hues

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Citizen collectives and organisations across the city held multiple activities and programmes to mark the 79th Independence Day.

Volunteers from the St. Broseph Army, the volunteering wing of Broseph Foundation, a Bengaluru-headquartered NGO, came together to clean up and restore Freedom Wall, a visual tribute to India's national icons, in Indiranagar.

'National heritage'
"This wasn't just about cleaning a wall, but it was about preserving a space that holds deep meaning for our community. It's a small but powerful way to honour our national heritage," said Tarini Shivnani, a volunteer. As part of the Independence Day celebrations and "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign, the central office, Central Silk Board, organised drawing, painting, and letter writing competitions for jawans at Government School, Madiwala. A movie screening of the film *Parmanu* and an awareness rally was also held. Canara Bank celebrated Independence Day by announcing scholarships for meritorious SC/ST girl students from underprivileged backgrounds, under the bank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, Canara bank Dr. Ambedkar Vidya Jyothi Scholarship. The scholarship will be distributed across 26 circle offices, 177 regional offices, and over 9,861 branches throughout the country.

Visual tribute: Volunteers reviving Bengaluru's Freedom Wall on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The bank also facilitated village adoption initiatives and the construction of toilets and sanitation facilities for girl students in rural schools. It also extended support to NGOs Sree Boomika Social Service Trust and Samarthanam Trust.

Week-long celebrations
Canadian International School celebrated the day alongside its milestone of 30 years of international education.

The week-long celebrations brought together people from over 40 nationalities.

1.79 lakh visitors throng Lalbagh flower show on I-Day

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As many as 1,79,090 people visited the Independence Day flower show organised in Lalbagh Botanical Garden on Friday bringing in a revenue of ₹85 lakh to the Horticulture Department.

The flower show was organised around the theme, 'Veera Rani Kittur Chennamma and Krantivira Sangolli Rayanna'. It was inaugurated on August 7 and will conclude on August 17.

Highest attendance
Since its inauguration, the show had the highest attendance on the occasion of Independence Day. A total of 1.45 lakh adults, 13,720 children and 19,650 school students visited the show on Friday, said M. Jagadeesh, Joint Director, Parks and Gardens, Horticulture Department.

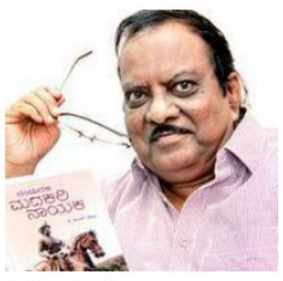
A floral replica of the fort of Kittur, horse-mounted statues of Chennamma and Rayanna, and other monuments from Kittur kingdom were the major attractions.

Before Sepoy Mutiny, palegars of Chitradurga attempted rebellion against the British

Sathish G.T.
SHIVAMOGGA

The story of seven chieftains (palegars), who attempted a rebellion against the British rule in Chitradurga, eight years before the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, is one of the lesser-known episodes in the fight against the British Raj. The records of British officer Major General R.S. Dobbs show that a group of people made a valiant effort to overthrow the British in Chitradurga in 1849, but failed.

Chitradurga, about 200 km from Bengaluru, was governed by palegars, who were feudatories earlier, under the Vijayanagara Empire. After they were defeated by Hyder Ali of Mysuru in 1779, the region came under the rule of the Mysore kings. Following the fourth Anglo-Mysuru war, in which Tipu Sultan died, the place came under the rule of the Wadiyars of Mysuru, who were guided by a British resident. Later in 1831, the British took over the administration due to the unrest caused by the oppression by cultivators in the State. Under the British rule, the family members of palegars, who had lost power, were forced to reside in Bengaluru, the seat of government, and they were restricted from visiting villages without special permission. Among them, seven palegars formed a group, "escaped from Bengaluru", and proceeded to the town of Dodderi, near Challakere. Keeping Dodderi as the centre, they moved around in the daytime to mobilise support and held meetings during the night. They recruited about 50 people and garnered the support of many more.



Author B.L. Venu

> I got the idea of this novel after listening to a lecture delivered by B. Nanjundaswamy
>
> **B.L. VENU**
> Author

All these developments were recorded by Mr. Dobbs, who was the commissioner of Chitradurga in those days. He gave a brief note about the rebellion that occurred in 1849, in his book *Reminiscences of life in Mysore, South Africa, and Burmah*, published in 1882. Mr. Dobbs, in his account of events, says he sent information to the Chief Commissioner in Bengaluru and commissioners in the neighbouring districts. As the days went, the rebel group moved to Holalkere and settled at a hillock.

Mr. Dobbs instructed the commanding officer at Chitradurga to reach the hill. Lieutenant Harkness, another young British officer, accompanied by the soldiers, attacked the palegars and captured all of them.

Noted writer B.L. Venu, who is known for his historical novels, penned *Durgada Bedardange* in 2021. Taking the basic facts about the rebellion from Mr. Dobbs's work and other sources, he narrated a story. "I got the idea of this novel after listening to a lecture delivered by B. Nanjundaswamy, a Tumakuru-based researcher, in February 2018," he said.

In the novel, the British officers hang the rebels in the historic fort of Chitradurga. Mr. Venu was convinced that the British must have punished them with the death penalty, as they did with other rebels, including Sangolli Rayanna in the past. "There had been many rebellions against the British, much before the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, which we call the first war of Indian Independence," he said.

Mr. Venu stated that the rebellion by the people of Chitradurga was a significant episode in Karnataka's history. "However, the rebellion did not receive due recognition. There should be further research on it and the State government should build a memorial so that the present generation remembers the sacrifice of our ancestors," he added.

Celebrities cannot use their status to influence the law, cautions top court

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, by cancelling Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa's bail in the Renukaswamy murder case, has sent a strong message that celebrity status cannot be used to sway the law.

"No individual - however wealthy, influential, or famous - can claim exemption from the rigours of law. A celebrity status does not elevate an accused above the law, nor entitle him to preferential treatment in matters like grant of bail. Popularity cannot be a shield for impunity," the Supreme Court cautioned.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan observed that influence, resources and social status cannot form a basis for granting bail where there was a genuine risk of prejudice to the investigation or trial.

'Not a passive onlooker'
Justice Mahadevan, who authored the scathing judgment, wrote the Karnataka High Court failed to consider "vital aspects" raised by the State government concerning Darshan's social and political clout.

Darshan

The State, represented by senior advocate Siddharth Luthra laid bare details of Darshan actively mobilising widespread media support and shaping the public narrative in his favour, thereby creating an atmosphere capable of prejudicing the ongoing investigation and undermining the fairness of the trial.

"He was not a passive onlooker but an active conspirator who played a pivotal role in the planning and executing the crime," Mr. Luthra had submitted.

The crime was not the result of a sudden provocation or emotional outburst. It was cold, calculated. The accused actor was involved in the systematic destruction of evidence, including deleting CCTV footage, bribing co-accused to falsely surrender, and using police and local influence to derail the investigation.

Though the High Court's grant of bail was primarily based on medical grounds raised by Darshan, a bare perusal of the health records showed the plea was "misleading, vague, and grossly exaggerated".

This fact was further confirmed when Darshan made "multiple public appearances, including participation in high-profile social events, was seen in fine health and mobility, and did not undergo any surgery or serious medical procedure post-release. This establishes that he abused the liberty of bail, which was obtained on a false and misleading premise".

The court criticised the bail order, saying the gravity of the offence and its impact on society should have weighed heavily with the court, which ought to have considered the plea for bail with greater care and circumspection.

"Celebrities serve as social role models – accountability is greater, not lesser. They, by virtue of their fame and public presence, wield substantial influence on public behaviour and social values. Granting leniency to such persons despite grave charges of conspiracy and murder, sends a wrong message to society and undermines public confidence in the justice system... In a democracy governed by the rule of law, no individual is exempt from legal accountability by virtue of status or social capital. Article 14 of the Constitution mandates that all persons – regardless of their popularity, power, or privilege – are equally subject to the law," the Supreme Court emphasised. The apex court warned the State of Karnataka that the day it heard any of the accused in the murder case was provided five-star treatment in jail, the first step it would take would be to suspend the jail superintendent and other officials involved in the misconduct.

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THE HINDU

Tier-2 cities emerge as
India's new investment hotspots

With planned infrastructure and economic growth, these cities offer smart investors a golden opportunity for higher returns and a premium lifestyle without the metro price tag

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK PHOTO

L.C. Mittal

The 2025 Investment landscape has seen a significant tilt in balance, with more astute investors looking beyond demographic-heavy saturated metro markets to the more compelling growth stories and Alpha markets of Tier 2 cities that have a better potential for returns. This strategic about-face betokens a growing recognition of India's shifting economic geography, where long-held tenets for investment are being reordered by demography, the emergence of new infrastructure, and rapidly changing business tastes that reward nimbleness over sheer bigness.

Investor preference in Pune remains at the top as the city has transcended the tag of Mumbai's satellite city and is now recognised as an individual, independent economic connector.

The vibrancy of the city's IT industry, top-notch academic institutions and geographical advantage, placed between Mumbai and the Deccan plateau, all add up in its favour.

Smart investors

Smart investors, especially, are targeting upcoming corridors such as Hinjewadi, Wakad and the Pune-Mumbai Expressway belt, where the residential market is giving rental yield returns in the region of 12%-15% year on year. Rental yields in the city are a healthy 3%-4%, much better than sub-2% returns in Mumbai, but with similar lifestyle features and quality of infrastructure on offer.

Ahmedabad is now the gem of Gujarat's real estate investment crown, favoured due to the state's business friendly policies and strong growth in its industries.

The city's skyline and infrastructure transformation post the Sabarmati Riverfront development, and an impending bullet train connection to Mumbai are drawing large private equity players to Ahmedabad. Locations like Science City, Bopal and Shela have seen tremendous demand from end users as well as investors with property appreciation of 8%-10% annually.

Kochi emerges as the most inviting destination for South India as it holds strategic prominence as a commercial port city and thriving IT destination. A cosmopolitan city with a thriving start-up ecosystem, and an excellent educational infrastructure, the city has attracted investors with its strong investment narrative. Smart investors are moving into pockets such as Kakkanad and Edapally or the fast-evolving suburbs on the NH-47 corridor.

Madhya Pradesh's commercial capital Indore too has been emerging as a prime investment hub. The city's position as a strategic region, with great local schools and an increasingly robust industry, has made for a consistent housing market.

A metropolitan lifestyle

A metropolitan lifestyle is possible at relatively less cost and with economic soundness. It's just the right mix of growth opportunity, affordability and quality of life that today's savvy investors are looking for. And as 2025 unfolds, the drive towards Tier-2 level investment is going to consolidate even further, with the pace of infrastructure growth continuing to accelerate, with the other untold story of the year being the push of corporate India no longer confined to metros.

The realisation that the next wave of urban expansion of the country is going to be powered by these emerging, dynamic cities that offer lifestyle impetus along with return on investment is beyond obvious.

The writer is Director, Motia Builders Group.

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‘My idea is always to rely less on human witnesses, more on scientific evidence’

The head of the Special Investigation Team that probed the Prajwal Revanna case shares insights into the high-profile cases he dealt with, including the murders of Gauri Lankesh and M.M. Kalburgi

INTERVIEW

B.K. Singh

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj

The Special Court of Sessions for criminal cases against former/present MPs and MLAs which convicted former MP for Hassan, Prajwal Revanna, and sentenced him to life in prison for the remainder of his natural life, all in a year and four months since the case was registered, appreciated the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for its first-of-its-kind “scientific investigation”.

B.K. Singh, a 1996-batch IPS officer, presently posted as the Additional Director General of Police, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), headed the SIT and has led several key investigations in Karnataka against high-profile public figures.

Over the last eight years, he has led three SIT probes into the murders of editor-activist Gauri Lankesh, scholar M.M. Kalburgi, and, the crimes of Prajwal Revanna and MLA Munirathna. He supervised the probe into POCSO case against former Chief Minister Yediyurappa and is now also probing the stampede at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here that killed 11.

Edited excerpts of a conversation *The Hindu* had with Mr. Singh:

The court, in its judgment convicting Prajwal Revanna, seems to have relied on three key pieces of evidence — the victim’s statement, the forensic report of the video of the act filmed by the accused that confirmed his identity, though his face was not visible, and the DNA report. Can you explain the technique involved in the investigation?

In a rape case, usually, apart from the victim’s testimony, what we have is biomedical evidence, which was not the case here, as the crimes were reported at least three years later. Instead, what we had was a video in which the accused had filmed his act, without his facial features being visible.

Crucially, forensic reports confirmed they were not edited or morphed. A voice sample match also came positive.

Then we examined how many distinctive marks were identifiable on the visible body parts of the accused in the video.

Photographs and videos of the body parts of the accused taken in custody were frame-by-frame compared with the videos. We could find five to eight marks and some deformities that matched.

Based on this, the forensic lab reached the conclusion that it is mathematically impossible for another person to have the same marks and deformities at the same points on the body.

We did the same exercise for the scene of the crime. The room in which the victim was raped at Gannikada farmhouse in Hassan was demolished in 2022.

But we matched the photographs taken of the room at the family’s Basavanagudi residence with the videos recorded there.

Forensic reports conclude the video was taken at the same place or a similarly dressed place.

In the Gauri Lankesh case, you used a technology called ‘gait analysis’ to forensically identify the shooter in the case. This forensic technique was used for the first time in the country.

It almost works on the same principle. Every person’s gait, or style of walking, is different. In Gauri Lankesh’s case, the CCTV camera at the house had captured the shooter wearing a helmet, his face not visible, standing at the gate and shooting at the victim. We had preserved the scene of the crime and the angle of the camera as well. When we caught the suspected shooter, we recreated the scene, which was again captured by the same CCTV camera. We submitted the footage of both videos to the DFS [Directorate of Forensic Science], Gujarat. Matching frame-to-frame and every step of the person in both videos, the report came back positive that the man in both videos is the same. This technique is now being used by many agencies across the country.

In three major investigations you have led — Gauri Lankesh, Prajwal Revanna and Munirathna — you have collected DNA evidence linking the accused to the victim or the scene of crime, even many years after the crime. How did this happen?

While going for a search-and-seizure operation, you have to be very thorough and collect everything you get.

In Prajwal Revanna’s case, we searched many places, but did not find anything. But when we questioned the victim about the clothes she was seen wearing in the video, she told us that she was thrown out of work, and she was not even allowed to collect her belongings. We sent a team to check, and the next worker who came and occupied the quarters had put all her belongings in a plastic cover and kept it aside. We found the clothes the victim was wearing when she was raped, and forensic experts found the accused’s semen traces on them.

DNA samples deteriorate only in a humid climate. In this case, it was kept in a plastic cover, and the DNA had dried up, and in such cases, it would not deteriorate for decades.

In the Gauri Lankesh case, we recovered a toothbrush, a comb and some hair samples.

They had thrown out the brush and comb after putting them in a plastic cover. It tied the accused to a house they had rented while carrying out the murder.

In the Gauri Lankesh case, you recovered an empty cartridge of a bullet fired from the murder weapon, which the accused had used for target practice, from a tree in a jungle in Belagavi. Though you couldn’t recover the murder weapon in the case, this evidence links the weapon to the accused.

My idea is to always rely less on human witnesses. The chances of them turning hostile or forgetting something while giving evidence are higher. So I always try to minimise human witnesses as much as possible and rely on scientific evidence.

DKS: Planning action over ‘misinformation campaign’

16-day digging operation by SIT yields little evidence about alleged mass burials in Dharmasthala

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has said that the State government is contemplating action against those who carried out a “misinformation campaign” against the pilgrim town of Dharmasthala and its authorities.

After 16 days of digging operation in Dharmasthala by the Special Investigation Team (SIT), which yielded little evidence about mass burials, as claimed by the complainant, a former sanitation worker, on Thursday, Mr. Shivakumar joined the BJP’s chorus that the case was a “big conspiracy” to tarnish the pilgrim town and its authorities.

An August 12 photo of a drone fixed with Ground-Penetrating Radar going around Site no.13 before the digging operation began in Dharmasthala. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

On Friday, he said the government was contemplating action against those who carried out a “misinformation campaign” against Dharmasthala.

Speaking to mediapersons at the KPCC office here, he said, “This is not about being for or against Dharmasthala. The process must be [carried out] as per the law. I have known Dharmasthala closely, and I have faith in the place. I firmly believe that the conspiracy will be exposed in the days to come. The Home Minister will present the facts about this case in the Legislature.”

Asked if there was a conspiracy, he said, “The Home Minister will explain it in detail. The Chief Minister is committed to bringing out the truth and has warned against any conspiracy to tarnish the image [of Dharmasthala]. The law is the same for everyone. There is no attempt to protect anyone. No one’s reputation must be tarnished.”

On Friday, Dakshina Kannada district in-charge Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said in Mangaluru that Home Minister G. Parameshwara’s detailed statement in the two Houses of the State Legislature on August 18 will reveal several facts related to the ongoing investigation by the SIT into the case. The Opposition BJP, meanwhile has dubbed the SIT probe as an attempt to tarnish the image of the Hindu place of worship.

Forest advisory committee defers KPCL’s Sharavathi PSP proposal

Sathish G.T.
SHIVAMOGGA

The forest advisory committee of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has deferred the Karnataka Power Corporation Limited’s (KPCL) proposal for the Sharavati Pumped Storage Project (PSP), seeking clarification with regard to the felling of trees in the project area.

The KPCL has proposed the project to generate 2,000 MW of power in the Sharavati Valley, using the Talakalale and the Gerusoppa reservoirs.

The KPCL has sought the diversion of 54.155 hectares of forestland for the project with the outlay of ₹10,240 crore.

The advisory committee, in its report on August 7, stated that it had a detailed discussion with the Deputy Director General of Forests (Central) of the regional office in Bengaluru and the nodal officer of the State government.

It sought clarifications/information for further considerations on three issues.

NBW meeting

Making a reference to the recommendations of the standing committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBW) in its 84th meeting held on June 26, the committee wanted the status of compliance.

The NBW, in its recommendations, stated that most of the 518 trees in the area where a surge tank had been proposed could be saved if an alternative underground structure was constructed with a narrow opening for an air outlet.

Further, the NBW stated that over 12,000 trees, enumerated for felling for the construction of the 12.3-km road from Nagarabasti Kere to Begodi, could be saved if the proposed underground road was extended up to the base of the pump house.

Such a modification in the plan could also help the lion-tailed macaque, the flagship species of the sanctuary.

The advisory committee wanted the status of compliance with regard to these recommendations.

Besides that, it also sought the State government’s comments on the issues raised by the regional office of the Ministry of Environment and Forests in the site inspection report (SIR).

The regional office had not recommended the proposal of the project, citing 15 reasons.

Praneetha Paul, DIGF, who conducted the inspection, expressed concern about the damage the project could cause to the Western Ghats.

Further, the committee had sought the comments of the regional office of Bengaluru on the concerns raised in the SIR.

Protest to intensify

Meanwhile, environmentalists of the Malnad region, opposing the project, have resolved to intensify their protests.

A meeting was held in Sagar in this regard on August 11. Environmentalists Akhilesh Chipli, Shivanand Kugve, Venkatesh Kavalakodu, and others attended the meeting and decided to spread awareness on the impacts of the project, among the people in Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts.

British retailer Tesco to open distribution centre in State

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Tesco, the U.K.-based retail giant, is planning to open a new distribution centre in Karnataka, which is expected to generate 15,000 additional jobs, according to Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil.

He also said Rolls-Royce, another U.K.-based company, was also actively exploring fresh investments in the State.

“The government will expedite all necessary processes to facilitate these companies’ plans,” the Minister stated.

He was speaking at a celebratory reception dinner hosted by the British Deputy High Commission in the city to mark the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Patil said the FTA pact was projected to boost bilateral trade by around £25 billion annually and was expected to help trade double approximately to £90 billion by 2030.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

With profound grief and immeasurable loss, we regret to inform you of the passing of

Shri R. Vishwanathan
Former GM, Union Bank of India
on August 12, 2025.
Ajo nityaḥ śāśhvato ‘yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śharire
Vishwanathan Family & Friends
Ph: 9444720465

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, NIRMALA SHANKER alias Nirmala Narendranath alias Nirmala Narendra Nath D/o Shanker W/o Narendra Nath Raghupathy R/O 4257 20th Main Road Subramanya Nagar Bengaluru Karnataka – 560021 changed my name to NIRMALA SHANKER.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
ZILLA PANCHAYATH, BELLARY
Office of the Executive Engineer, P.R.E. Division, Bellary.

No. EE/PRED/BLY/AE-1/various heads/2025-26/768 Dt. 14-08-2025.

Short Term Tender Notification (Through KPPP Portal only)

On behalf of Hon’ble Governor of Karnataka tenders are invited from the eligible contractors who have enrolled in Panchayath Raj Engineering Department for 04 works comprising of approved Buildings and Road works under 2024-25 KKRDB, 2023-24 CM Special Grant 5054 Roads and 2023-24 MLA Grant through KPPP portal.

Indent No.1.RDPR/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT16592/Call-2, 2.RDPR/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT17196/Call-2, 3.RDPR/2025-26/WS/WORK_INDENT14665/Call-2, 4.RDPR/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT16284/Call-2

Contractors are required to submit the tender before **22-08-2025 at 4.30 PM** by uploading the relevant documents through KPPP portal website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in by downloading the formats for submission of tenders from **14-08-2025 to 22-08-2025 at 4.30 PM.** Tenders will be opened through KPPP portal on **25-08-2025 at 10.30 AM.** Any changes in the notification will be published KPPP website only. Accepting/rejection of tenders without assigning reason is reserved. Any details can be obtained in person at the office or through telephone No. 08392-266173.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
DIPR/Ballari/372/KSMCA/2025-26 Panchayath Raj Engineering Division Ballari

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER
(Only through KPP-Portal)

BWSSB invites tenders from eligible contractors for the following works:

Office of the Chief Engineer (North), 2nd Floor, Kaveri Bhavan K.G.Road, Bengaluru - 560 009

Division	IFT Number	Amount put to tender / EMD (in Rs.)	Last Date & time for Submission of Tender	Date & Time for Opening of Tender
North East	BWSSB/EE(NE)/TO/PB/1450/2025-26, Date: 14.08.2025	Rs.78,51,403/- / Rs.1,57,100/-	25.08.2025 upto 3:00 PM	26.08.2025 after 4:00 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North-East)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during the working hours.

DIPR/CP/2333/SA/2025-26

KARNATAKA STATE HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
(A Government of Karnataka undertaking)
PWD Annexe Building, Project Implementation Unit, 1st Floor,
K.R. Circle, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560001
KSHIP

No. PIU/KSHIP-IV/IFB/2025-26/09 Date: 16.08.2025

Short Term Tender Notification (through KPP Portal) - Call-2

1. Karnataka State Highway Improvement Project [KSHIP] invites bids for "Consultancy services for preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) and providing financial advisory services for the following State Highway Road works in Packages under KSHIP-IV". Selection will be based on Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS).

Package No.	Description	EMD (Rs in Lakhs)
Package - 1	Preparation of DPR and financial advisory services for 3 State Highways roads of length 266 km	10 Lakh
Package - 2	Preparation of DPR and financial advisory services for 3 State Highways roads of length 253 km	10 Lakh
Package - 4	Preparation of DPR and financial advisory services for 3 State Highways roads of length 186 km	10 Lakh

2. The Consultant shall furnish as part of its Proposal, EMD of Rs 10,00,000/- (Rupees Ten lakhs only) – (1 Lakh through KPP portal and 9 Lakh in the form of BG)
3. The bid documents can be downloaded from Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (KPPP) of GoK.
4. Bids must be submitted online only at Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (KPPP) of GoK on or before **28.08.2025** (up to **16:30** hrs IST).
5. Pre-bid Queries shall be submitted on or before **20.08.2025, 11:00** hrs only through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal/e-mail: piukship@gmail.com
6. Pre-bid meeting will be held on **20.08.2025, 15:00** hrs at KSHIP, PWD Annexe Building, Project Implementation Unit, 1st Floor, K.R. Circle, Bengaluru, Karnataka KSHIP office.
7. Technical Bids will be opened on **30.08.2025** at **15:00** hrs.
8. Please note, any addendum/clarification/calendar of events regarding the bid document will be updated only in the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (KPPP) of GoK.
9. Bid submitted through any other mode shall not be entertained.
10. The Authority reserves the right to accept or reject all or any of the bids without assigning any reason.
11. The Documents will be available for downloading in KPPP portal from **18.08.2025, 11:00** hrs onwards.

Sd/-
Project Director
KSHIP, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/2336/CCL/2025-26

In a first, women to take over reins of Malayalam movie artistes' association

The election was held after the Mohanlal-led group quit in August 2024 following allegations of sexual harassment against some of its members that came to light in the Hema panel report; actors Shwetha Menon and Kukku Parameswaran were elected president and general secretary, respectively

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

For the first time since its inception, the Association of Malayalam Movie Artistes (AMMA) will be led by women.

In a keen contest held here on Friday, actors Shwetha Menon and Kukku Parameswaran were elected president and general secretary after they defeated actors Devan and Raveendran respectively. Shwetha polled 159 votes against 132 votes secured by Devan. Ms. Parameswaran bagged 172 votes while Raveendran got 115 votes.

Jayan Cherthala and Lakshmi Priya were elected to the two posts of vice-president. Unni Shivapal is the new treasurer.

The members of the executive committee (general) are Sarayu Mohan, Anjali Nair, Asha Aravind, Neena Kurup, Joy Mathew, Kailash, Santhosh Keehattoor, Vinu Mohan, Rony David Raj, Tini Tom, and Sijoy Varghese. Ansiba Hassan was elected unopposed as joint secretary.

Nearly 298 of the 506 members cast votes to elect the executive committee for the next three years. Mr. Mohanlal was among those who came early to vote while Mammootty did not turn up.

Joyful win: Actors Shwetha Menon and Kukku Parameswaran share a moment of joy after the results were announced. R.K.NITHIN

The actors' body never had a woman as its president or general secretary since its three-decade-old existence, though they had been elected to the post of vice-president, joint secretary, and as members of the executive committee on earlier occasions.

The election was necessitated after the previous committee led by actor Mohanlal resigned in August 2024 following allegations of sexual harassment against some of its members after the release of the K. Hema Committee report that probed the problems faced by women in the Malayalam film industry.

Backing from actors

The candidature of Ms. Menon had received a boost after senior actors, including Mr. Mohanlal and Mr. Mammootty, agreed to the growing clamour for having women in lead roles. Senior actor Jagadeesh, who had initially filed the nomination for the post of president, backed out after extending support for a woman president.

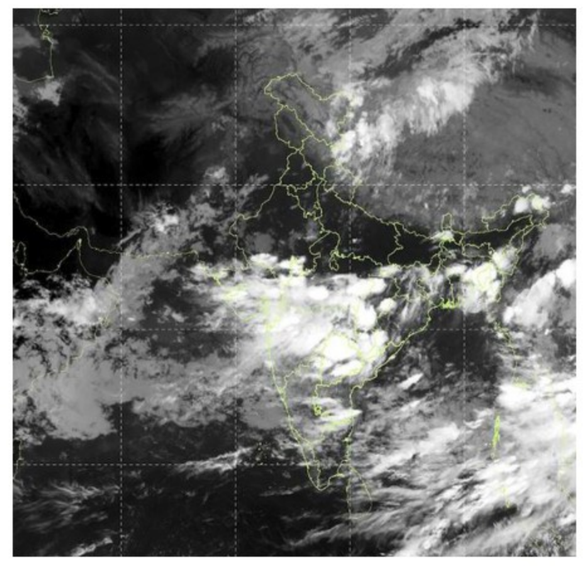
Actor Baburaj, who had filed his nomination for the post of general secretary, withdrew from the race amid criticism by a section of the actors that those facing allegations of sexual misconduct must stay away from the election.

Congratulating the actors, State Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cherian said that "it is necessary to create more opportunities for women in the film industry".

(With PTI inputs)

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy to very heavy rain likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Mahe, Nagaland, Manipur, Konkan and Goa.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	11.0	34.6	25.6	Kozhikode	047.0	26.0	23.2
Ahmedabad	—	33.2	27.2	Kurnool	001.0	31.1	23.7
Aizawl	003.0	32.0	22.4	Lucknow	—	34.3	26.7
Allahabad	—	35.0	26.4	Madurai	—	36.5	25.3
Bengaluru	000.4	26.8	19.3	Mangaluru	058.1	26.2	22.6
Bhopal	000.2	32.8	24.6	Mumbai	045.0	26.5	24.2
Bhubaneswar	009.0	32.4	25.1	Mysuru	002.0	—	19.0
Chandigarh	020.0	33.7	24.9	New Delhi	066.0	30.8	23.3
Chennai	—	34.8	27.2	Patna	000.4	34.5	27.9
Coimbatore	—	30.5	22.0	Port Blair	033.5	27.1	23.6
Dehradun	005.0	30.1	23.3	Puducherry	—	33.0	24.1
Gangtok	006.0	24.3	17.8	Pune	000.2	30.6	24.1
Goa	024.0	28.6	25.0	Raipur	—	33.4	26.3
Guwahati	000.2	34.6	26.2	Ranchi	013.0	27.4	22.6
Hubballi	—	26.0	22.0	Shillong	016.0	24.8	17.5
Hyderabad	002.9	29.7	21.5	Shimla	011.0	22.5	20.0
Imphal	068.0	31.6	22.1	Srinagar	005.0	29.0	20.0
Jaipur	006.0	34.0	25.6	Thiruvananthapuram	025.0	30.6	23.4
Kochi	025.0	29.8	23.8	Tiruchi	—	34.3	25.6
Kohima	001.0	23.0	18.8	Vijayawada	—	—	—
Kolkata	000.1	32.3	27.3	Visakhapatnam	000.7	33.2	26.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.15	..20	88	 51	81	.....
Bengaluru	...5	..21	.—	 31	69	.....
Chennai	...2	..16	.—	 43	...116	.....
Delhi	.12	..27	45	 70	...146	.....
Hyderabad	.14	..14	36	 47	75	.....
Kolkata	...3	113	16	 41	38	.....
Lucknow	.11	..36	80	 25	39	.....
Mumbai	...9	..12	..2	 18	64	.....
Pune	..—	..20	87	 13	21	.....
Visakhapatnam	...7	..40	18	 51	88	.....

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Gurugram, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 185 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 8.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Will go to Delhi and speak to high command to know the reason for sacking: Rajanna

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

K.N. Rajanna, who was recently sacked from the Siddaramaiah-led cabinet, said on Friday that he will be going to New Delhi after the Assembly session to meet the leaders to know the exact reasons for his removal.

He also expressed confidence about coming back as minister within the current government's tenure.

The Madhugiri MLA was Co-operative Minister and removed from the cabinet on Monday, following directions from the Congress high command. His comments on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "vote theft" allegations during the 2024 Lok Sabha polls had not gone down well with the party high command.

Voter list

Noting that the voter lists for the polls in Karnataka were prepared under the Congress government, he had questioned his own party as to why they didn't stop the irregularities then.

'Confident'

Speaking to reporters on Friday, he said he was confident that the high command would get convinced about his explanation when he meets them. "There may be some people in Delhi who are conspiring against me," he said.

Mr. Rajanna said the Chief Minister himself was not aware that the high command was thinking of sacking. "Mr. Siddaramaiah had tried to convince the high command, but when they said a decision had been made, the he told me the situation. I said fine," he added.

Asked whether his open statements proved costly for him, Rajanna said, "I might have spoken certain truth. I will go to Delhi and try to find out," Mr. Rajanna added.

Surrogacy, egg donor racket busted; 8 held

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Police have arrested two agents and six women who were egg donors or surrogate mothers, for running a commercial surrogacy and illegal human egg trading racket in Medchal.

The police identified the prime accused as Narreddula Laxmi Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, and her son, Narender Reddy, who is accused of assisting her in the operation.

Investigations revealed that Laxmi, who had previously worked as an egg donor and surrogate mother, exploited her contacts with fertility clinics and other agents to recruit financially vulnerable women who were persuaded to become egg donors or surrogates and referred to clinics in Hyderabad for large sums of money. The role of fertility centres and hospitals involved in the racket are being verified.

Guard against rising threats to sovereignty and communal harmony, says Kerala CM

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said the nation must guard itself from both external imperialist forces that loom over the sovereignty of the country and internal threats that seek to undermine social unity.

Leading Kerala's 79th Independence Day celebrations here on Friday, he added that the national achievements in science and technology should not overshadow the lived realities of marginalised sections.

Mr. Vijayan, who hoisted the national flag and received the salute at the ceremonial parade at Central Stadium here, reflected on the nation's foundational dreams to build an India without poverty, hunger, child labour, illiteracy, caste discrimination, religious hatred, and unemployment. Although the vision remains unfulfilled, it represents the path the nation must continue to tread.

He raised caution against communal forces that aim to sow divisions in society. "Communal forces are trying to divide the country along religious and caste lines. Such attempts, which challenge the idea of India itself, have grown stronger. We must resist and defeat all such divisions and stand united and above all differences."

The constitutional values of freedom, democracy, secularism, and socialism that define the Indian Republic are not mere ideals, but imperatives that must be embodied and implemented in practice, he added.

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan receives guard of honour during the parade in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Gandhi's message

Invoking Mahatma Gandhi's ideals, Mr. Vijayan exhorted the country to recognise its deeper moral obligations, rather than becoming blinded by superficial grandeurs.

"While cities across the country celebrated Independence Day with dazzling festivities, he [Gandhi] stayed away from them all. Instead, he walked into the dark alleys and slums, choosing to be one among the marginalised. His message was one of humanity and patriotism, and every person who understands that should reflect on the duties it implies. This is the mindset we need to bring into our celebrations," he said.

Delving into Kerala's surge towards a scientific, knowledge-driven society, the Chief Minister said the State advances while simultaneously ensuring its development and the people's welfare.

CM's medals

The Chief Minister gave away the President's Police Medals, Fire Service Medals, Correctional Service Medals and other awards for excellence.

Pet-friendly rides becoming popular in Bengaluru as more aggregators start services

Jahnavi T.R.
BENGALURU

Major aggregators such as Uber and Rapido launched pet services in October 2024, while Namma Yatri started it in July 2025, following growing demand from animal activists and pet owners. PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE

For years now, animal activists and pet owners in Bengaluru have highlighted the lack of animal transportation services in the city. With the number of animal ambulances of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike and Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services few and far in between, the introduction of 'pet services' on cab/auto aggregator apps, has come as a much-needed relief.

Major aggregators like Uber and Rapido launched pet services in October 2024, while Namma Yatri started it earlier this month, following growing demand from the community, according to a spokesperson of the aggregator.

2,000 pet rides per day

A spokesperson from Rapido claimed that almost 2,000 pet rides are booked daily in the city. Frequent takers of the services say that while there is a fare difference of around ₹15 to ₹20 in autorickshaws and anything around ₹100 - ₹200 in cabs, between normal rides and pet rides, it has become a convenient option for them.

"I first came across the services of a pet autorickshaw when I had to drop my pet cat off at a boarding service a few kilometres away from my house. Now it has become my go-to for my pet's veterinary appointments and small outings. I end up paying about ₹20 extra on short rides, and I do not mind it at all. Before coming across these services, I always had to depend on other family members or haggle with auto drivers to take my pet out," said Rukmini Kashyap, a resident of Jakkur.

Animal activists say that these services have made it easier to get urgent care for animals during the golden hour. "Just like humans, even for animals, it is critical to get care during the golden hour when they are injured. We struggled for a long time with no options for small animal transportation, as the government animal ambulances are hardly ever available on time. The price on these apps is a little higher, but something is better than nothing. The rides are fairly available on time," said Arun Kumar, a long-time animal activist and pet owner.

"While these services are available, we still have to end up bearing the costs even while rescuing animals from public spaces. The need of the hour is increasing the number of government ambulances, including two-wheeler and three-wheeler ambulances," he added. Aggregators said that they launched pet-ride services after many pet owners repeatedly complained about the difficulties they face while transporting their pets.

"Uber launched Uber Pet in Bengaluru in October 2024 to address the growing need for pet-friendly transportation options. Recognising the important role pets play in their families, Uber designed this service to make travel more accessible and convenient for pet owners and their companions. The goal is to provide a seamless, stress-free experience for pet parents whether traveling to the vet, a pet-friendly café, or other destinations, while also creating additional earning opportunities for drivers," a spokesperson from Uber said.

To add on to the experience, some aggregators have also tied up with other animal services. "We have extended the (pet service) experience by partnering with pet clinics and stores to offer added benefits such as discounts and care consultations," said a spokesperson from Rapido.

Nagaland Governor Ganesan passes away at 80

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

L. Ganesan, Governor of Nagaland and former senior BJP leader from Tamil Nadu, passed away in Chennai on Friday at the age of 80.

He had earlier served as the Governor of Manipur and held the additional charge as the Governor of West Bengal. A bachelor, he had recently celebrated his 80th birthday in a grand manner in Chennai. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin attended the event.

A few days ago, Ganesan suffered a fall in the bathroom and sustained head injuries, which led to his demise. A native of Thanjavur district, Ganesan was a passionate admirer of Carnatic music and made it a point of attending the annual Thyagaraja Aradhana in Thiruvaiyaru. His association with the RSS began in his school days, with his family being closely connected to the organisation.

L. Ganesan

In 1991, he was deputed to help build the BJP in Tamil Nadu and subsequently resigned from the RSS as its deputy organising secretary to focus on the party work. He went on to serve as the general secretary and president of the BJP's Tamil Nadu unit. At the national level, he held the position of BJP vice-president. He contested twice, albeit unsuccessfully, from the South Chennai Lok Sabha constituency.

In 2017, Mr. Ganesan was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh, following the appointment of the then MP, Najma Heptulla, as the Governor of Manipur.

Health, education focus of A.P. govt: CM

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has said that the Andhra Pradesh government has taken up a project to construct 100 to 300-bedded multi-speciality hospitals in all the 175 Assembly constituencies of the State and that about ₹233 crore is being spent for strengthening the Primary, Urban and General Health Centres.

Mr. Naidu hoisted the national flag as part of the 79th Independence Day celebrations at Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium here on Friday and received the guard of honour from the armed contingents, police and NCC Battalions.

Welfare measures

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Naidu said top priority is being given for welfare and development, health, education and agriculture sectors. The government has distributed uniform kits to students at a cost of ₹953 crore. Women can travel free of charge in buses under Stree Shakthi scheme, Mr. Naidu said.

The State is also planning to allot three cents of land in rural areas and two cents in urban areas free of cost to people to construct houses, Mr. Naidu said.

Figure of speech

The Prime Minister held out assurances even while feeding apprehension

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 12th consecutive Independence Day address from the Red Fort was notable not only for highlighting national security and self-reliance but also for laying stress on a communally coloured demographic threat to the country. While showering praise on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Mr. Modi repeated its refrain by saying that the seeds of a new crisis were being sown. The launch of a High-Powered Demography Mission, to address what he described as "a deliberate conspiracy" to alter the demography of the country, is little more than a thinly disguised effort to polarise the country on religious lines by pointing to the different rates of growth in population among different communities and to the "infiltration" of undocumented migrants from the neighbouring countries. However, the speech also dwelt on substantive issues with a considerable focus on self-reliance in all fields including the economy, defence and technology, and youth empowerment. Mr. Modi also presented an account of the developments in India's national security and developmental landscape in the last year, and previewed what to anticipate ahead.

Mr. Modi lauded the armed forces for Operation Sindoor, which, he said, showcased the effectiveness of India's defence capabilities and indigenous weaponry. He also used the occasion to warn India's adversaries, particularly Pakistan, underscoring the policy of zero tolerance toward terrorism and cross-border attacks. Recent successes in the combat against the Maoist insurgency also found a mention. As in a plan announced by Mr. Modi, Mission Sudarshan Chakra, a fully indigenous defence system, will be developed and deployed by 2035. The details were scarce, but he described it as "a powerful weapon system" which "will not only neutralise the enemy's attack but will also hit back at the enemy many times more". Speaking amid rapid changes in global power equations, Mr. Modi's Independence Day message was also aimed at the United States, which has announced tariffs as high as 50% on many Indian products. While promising to focus on revving up the domestic economy, Mr. Modi showed an awareness of the challenges that the Indian economy is facing. The next generation GST reforms would be rolled out by Deepavali 2025, which would reduce the tax burden on core goods and services and boost business. On the one hand, Mr. Modi is trying to cultivate his ideological ecosystem while on the other, he is trying to tackle the material challenges facing the nation. The success of one, however, can only come at the cost of the other.

A paradigm shift

India needs to think anew on its trade relations and strategies

On August 11, the central government implored India's seafood industry, that provides livelihoods to about 28 million people, to "bravely face" the U.S.'s tariffs of 25% that kicked in on August 7 and which could be raised to 50% on August 27, contingent upon the outcome of trade negotiations. On Wednesday, highly placed sources in the Commerce and Finance Ministries told *The Hindu* that the government is exploring "tweaking" the Export Promotion Mission (EPM), that was announced in the 2025 Union Budget, with an outlay of ₹2,250 crore for the current fiscal year. The EPM, a multi-Ministry project to drive access to cheaper export credit, overcome non-trade barriers and insure payments from overseas buyers, focuses on India's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME). Initially meant to be driven by the Ministries of Commerce, MSME and Finance, discussions are on to include the Textiles and Fisheries Ministries. These two industries, which collectively support about 135 million Indians, form among the largest segment of MSMEs that are likely to face the most impact due to the sanctions. The U.S. typically accounts for roughly a third of India's apparel and seafood exports annually.

The government's imploration to also diversify into other markets is a tacit admission that the Bilateral Trade Agreement negotiations with the U.S. are deadlocked, and that the personal equations between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S President Donald Trump have not translated into a win for either side. Bilateral relations have arguably hit a level lower than during the Cold War, as the two nations were not as enmeshed as they are now, economically, culturally and militarily. Trade and service routes and supply chains take decades to build and undoing them overnight is not possible. This has been clear from the European Union's reliance on Russian oil and the global dependence on rare earth elements from China. While consultations have been ongoing between the government and MSME sector stakeholders ever since Mr. Trump announced "reciprocal tariffs" in April, there is a chorus now for drastic governmental intervention to safeguard the backbone of the economy – it contributes nearly half (45.79% in FY25) of goods exports and employs over 28 crore people. The fisheries sector has sought a 240-day moratorium on pre- and post-shipment credit repayment, while the textiles, apparel and gem and jewellery sectors want interest subvention. The government has, however, ruled out direct subsidies. But unprecedented challenges require novel responses. The government must include in its arsenal a drastic refashioning of near-term trade ties with neighbours, in particular, China, which it had ignored in the hope that the assiduous cultivation of ties with Washington would pay off.

The politics of insurgency, the decline of Naxalism

Across history, making predictions has been a hazardous task. Nevertheless, leaders of all types continue to make predictions, only a few of which turn out to be true. In today's world, where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is leading to more uncertainty, making predictions has become still more hazardous. For most of history, the safest prediction has been that things will continue to be much as they are. Political leaders should heed this.

M.K. Narayanan

is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

A case of contrasts

A concern across the world is that a quarter of century after the September 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers in New York, the threat of terrorism, far from receding or abating, still remains alive. Many instances of 'copycat killings' continue to take place. There has also been a spurt in Islamic State (IS)- inspired vehicle rammings of late, the most publicised case being the one which took place in New Orleans, U.S. on January 1 this year. Well before the New Orleans attack, the IS had orchestrated and inspired several other attacks of a similar nature across Europe. Counter-terrorism experts believe that Jihadist groups were only beginning to intensify their terror attacks in several countries. Online campaigns were, meanwhile, inciting more 'lone wolf' attacks. Alongside this, anti-Israel protests in many parts of the world, seemed to provide more grist to IS and al -Qaeda-sponsored terror campaigns.

Doomsday predictions that tomorrow's terrorists will be even involved in more sanguinary campaigns than earlier ones are emerging. This is thanks to the advent of AI. The warnings are that AI-enabled terrorists, together with terrorists, are gaining access to 'bio weapons', which could lead to the killing of thousands. Another given prediction is that misaligned AI could break free of all human control to unleash unthinkable harm on society and the world at large.

The scenario above is, however, very different from what is being seen in India of late, which features a declining curve in militancy, at least of ideologically-oriented terrorism. The accepted wisdom is that the current declining curve of Naxalite or Maoist violence heralds an end to ideological terrorism in the country. A normally taciturn Union Home Minister himself indicated that the end of Naxalism is near, and that mid-2026 would mark the final demise of Naxalite violence. If so, it would spell the end of what was once perceived to be a vibrant, ideologically-driven, militant movement which, in its heyday, had captured the imagination of youth and intellectuals, and also energised what philosopher Frantz Fanon had referred to as the 'wretched of the earth', *viz.*, tribals in the deepest forests and the 'urban poor' in the cities. Till now, however, what had been witnessed were several 'false dawns' (as for instance towards the end of 1970s and at least twice thereafter prior to the end of 20th century). The elimination of Naxalite violence had, however, never been officially pronounced till date.

> Doomsday predictions about tomorrow's global terrorists are very different from what is being seen in India of late — a declining curve in militancy, or ideologically-oriented terrorism

The revolutionary fervour seemed to evaporate all too soon. Even while revolutionary leaders such as Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Satyanarayan Singh, and Kondapalli Seetharamaiah were being extolled, the movement had slowly started losing much of its sheen, degenerating into mindless violence – initially in the urban areas, but soon thereafter even in the interior jungles of the country. A once integrated revolutionary movement soon split into separate regional entities, though the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) remained for quite some time, the leading light of the movement. An all-India fervour was markedly absent, and the movement became centered around the hilly and forested regions of central India, especially in States such as Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.

The promise of a 'Spring Thunder Over India' in the early 1960s, had, no doubt, attracted some of the best and the brightest of the generation at the time, who were fired by a revolutionary zeal (following the successful revolutions in China and other parts of the world, including South America). The heroes of the time were revolutionaries such as China's Chairman Mao, Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, and South America's Che Guevara and the like. Even as Charu Mazumdar of Bengal was being hailed as 'the new Messiah', the resounding slogan was 'China's Chairman is our Chairman'. Yet, the early promise has begun to be dispelled.

The campaign against Naxalism

Beginning in 2024, and under directions from the Union Home Minister, a sustained offensive was launched against militant Naxalite groups in different States. The data on Naxalites killed in encounters vary, but it is generally accepted that a few thousands were eliminated. Police chiefs in the worst Naxalite-affected areas have provided their own counts of the numbers of Naxalites eliminated or killed. But perhaps, the most authentic figure on the numbers could be found in a booklet released by the once banned CPI (Maoist), which admitted that during the past year alone, 357 Naxalites had been killed in encounters with security forces across the country. Among the killed, according to this report, more than a third belonged to the women's cadre.

The epicentre of violence was the Dandakaranya region which spans parts of Bastar district in Chhattisgarh, Gadchiroli in Maharashtra and several areas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. The shrinkage of territory was compounded by internal bickerings and a series of leadership crises since the removal of M. Lakshman Rao alias Ganapathi in 2018.

On the surface, the war on Naxalism might seem to parallel United States President Donald Trump's 'war on terror', launched soon after he took over as President for a second term. Yet, there are marked differences. The U.S. President's offensive was launched not so much against ideologically inspired militants or terrorists, but against those elements who did not believe in any ideology other than that of attacking the 'great Satan'. The offensive launched by the U.S. was, hence, markedly different from that employed in India, where Naxalites lived and identified closely with villagers and their ilk. The use of brute force was not seen till recently as the answer, except in exceptional circumstances. To compare the U.S. President's attacks against Jihadists in Somalia and Yemen – based on the logic that Jihadist groups were plotting against the U.S. – with the tactics employed by the Indian security forces against Naxalites would, hence, be an error. There were, and still exist, many checks and balances in the Indian context on the use of deadly force, even against adversaries who believe in overthrowing the established order through violence.

The campaign against Naxalites and Naxalite violence, has, by and large, been conducted along certain well-defined lines. Preventing revolutionary groups, however high-minded they may proclaim to be, and irrespective of the grievances they have, from disturbing the established order has, however, been the set objective of whichever government has/governments have been in power in Delhi or in the States. Admittedly, the original Naxalites were filled with revolutionary fervour and were intent on putting in place a more democratic order. However, having failed to achieve their objective, they soon began to resort to indiscriminate violence. Having said this, it is also true that even while they resorted to indiscriminate violence, most groups retained a veneer of ideology.

A new term

The distinction is important and vital. Currently, the misuse of the term 'urban naxals' has given a distorted view of the original Naxalite movement. The origin of the 'Spring Thunder Over India' initiated in the late 1960s, was based on certain principles, however misdirected these might have been. The Marxist-Leninist Movement also had a well-defined structure and a robust philosophy. While not denigrating today's 'urban naxals', the latter seem, at least for the present, to be a loose-knit group of intellectuals who are opposed to the actions of the administration and the government on several policy aspects. Today's 'urban naxals' have little in common with the original Naxalites.

Wrong classification could and would have unintended consequences. Inability to identify, comprehend and implement policies to address such matters can again magnify the risk they pose. Better understanding of the factors involved is needed to avoid incurring high latent costs. It is vital to avoid blind spots that arise due to cognitive bias or short-sightedness.

Balancing code and commerce in U.K. trade compact

India's digital trade compact with the United Kingdom breaks new ground. Chapter 12 of the India-U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) sets out a bargain that trades some oversight tools for access, credibility and scale. The trade-off has sparked a policy debate. Supporters call it a strategic step into the global digital economy. Critics call it a retreat from digital sovereignty. Such agreements rarely produce winner-take-all outcomes. They usually end in negotiated compromises. On balance, the gains look real, but they signal a need for guard rails that keep pace with evolving risks.

Syed Akbaruddin

is a former Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations and, currently, Dean, Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad

Shivangi Pandey

is Executive Assistant to the Dean, Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad

The digital wins

The digital wins are clear. The agreement recognises electronic signatures and contracts and commits both sides to work towards mutual recognition. That trims paperwork for software-as-a-service firms and also lowers barriers for small and medium enterprises. Paperless trade and electronic invoicing make cross-border documentation and payments easier. And policy continuity on zero customs duties for electronic transmissions protects a software export pipeline that the Commerce Ministry estimates at $30 billion a year.

Cooperation on data innovation can help too. The text encourages pilot projects that use regulatory sandboxes where required. That gives payments and other data-driven firms a way to test and scale tools under supervision, which builds credibility abroad. Beyond the digital chapter, the broader India-U.K. deal is expected to improve day-to-day commerce. Industry expects that as the agreement is implemented, close to 99% of Indian merchandise exports could enter the U.K. duty-free, with textile tariffs falling sharply, including from 12% to zero on key lines, increasing growth prospects in textile export hubs such as Tiruppur (Tamil Nadu) and Ludhiana (Punjab). Analysts also point to more doors opening in British public procurement for Indian IT suppliers. Employers say social-security waivers for short assignments could cut payroll costs by roughly one-fifth. These moves promise a wider and more predictable trade corridor.

> The gains look real but also signal a need for guard rails

The digital costs

Nevertheless, the possible digital costs deserve attention. Critics have contended that India has stepped back from source-code checks as a default regulatory tool, as there is a ban on code-inspection under the agreement. Regulators can demand access on a case-by-case basis, tied to an investigation or a court process.

Government procurement is excluded from the scope of digital trade. Hence any access to source code in products procured by government is not restricted. While the agreement aims to enhance business trust, it does not sacrifice essential interests. A general security exception exists. It preserves national supervision of power grids, or payment systems and other critical infrastructure, even if privately owned. The restriction is only of good governance, ensuring that action is not taken in a manner which would constitute a disguised restriction on trade. Should additional reassurance be required, a practical step could be to accredit trusted labs for reviewing sensitive code, under tight safeguards.

On government data, the posture is voluntary. There is no legally binding commitment. India decides what to publish and in what form. When it does open a dataset, it should be machine-readable and easy to reuse. This is not a blank cheque for anyone to demand access. India could also seek clear audit trails for cross-border data intermediaries so that accountability follows the data.

There is no "automatic MFN (most favoured nation)" for cross-border data flows. Instead, the agreement creates a forward review mechanism. If one side later signs a trade pact with tougher data rules, the two sides consult on whether to extend equivalent terms. There is a promise to talk; not an autopilot extension.

A formal review is stipulated within five years. As multiple versions of ChatGPT in under three years show that AI is developing rapidly, future pacts should have a review every three years to align rules with risks.

Aligning with modern trade norms marks a departure from past Indian practice, but this makes sense for a country that is seeking a larger role in the global digital economy. It reflects India's shift from trade scepticism to strategic engagement.

Domestic foundations usually anchor external commitments. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023 still needs notification of final rules. For future trade texts to build on that framework, the rules need to institutionalise open consultations before deals are closed so that inputs are sought and concerns surface early and can be addressed in time.

Steps to take

Digital treaties decide what governments can regulate, what companies can expect, and what citizens can protect. Chapter 12 of the India-U.K. agreement is a milestone in terms of a first step. In future, India should integrate market-openness with regulatory oversight. It could accredit trusted labs to review sensitive code under strict safeguards and also mandate audit trails for cross-border data flows. It could also institutionalise broad-based pre-negotiation consultations and schedule regular three-year reviews of digital treaties. Together, these steps show that sovereignty and global engagement need not pull in opposite directions but, instead, can power the modern Indian economy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stray dog control

A statement made by an animal rights activist, that rabies is a '*halki beemari*' (mild illness'), is outrageous. Rabies is a lethal virus with 100% mortality. Such a statement reflects an indefensibly callous attitude, which ignores the danger that aggressive street dogs pose to working people, and who cannot sequester themselves in their houses like the elite. However, the Supreme Court of India's directive that all dogs in Delhi must be captured within eight weeks is unfeasible and inhumane. The scientific method to control the canine population is by implementing the Animal Birth Control rules. The Municipal Corporation should partner with welfare organisations to sterilise and vaccinate dogs. The Public Health Department should ensure that all hospitals and *mohalla* clinics have stocks of rabies and tetanus vaccines. It should also run an awareness campaign that both injections must be administered within 24 hours of a dog bite.

Aarti Sethi,
New Delhi

Doorstep ration delivery

I was pleasantly surprised when the two women who usually handle the sale of ration items in the government shop in my area called me to say that they were at my gate. They were from the women's co-operative stores. Everything was executed smoothly but the women looked exhausted and were struggling with poor wi-fi connectivity. If senior citizens are to benefit from this scheme — it is called the '*Thaayumanavar Thittam*' and is meant for senior citizens — they should have their cards and containers ready. With this step, the mobile delivery of rations would be much easier for government staff.

Mini Krishnan,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Rescue operations after a landslide and flooding flattened Dharali village in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand on August 5. SHASHI SHEKAR KASHYAP

The day a village in Uttarkashi disappeared

On August 5, a deluge of rain that led to a landslide and flooding flattened the village of Dharali in Uttarakhand. So far, only one body has been retrieved and 69 people remain missing. Rescue teams are battling challenging conditions to do their work. Many, in this village of less than 1,000 people, have lost lives and livelihoods in the tragedy, reports **Ishita Mishra**

Before August 5, when the first rays of the sun hit the houses of Dharali, a village situated 2,700 metres above sea level in the Himalayas, the sounds of conch shells and temple bells would fill the air.

Hundreds of pilgrims travelling to the Gangotri temple – one of the Char Dhams, among the most sacred pilgrimage circuits in northern India with four holy destinations – would stop at Dharali to rest, sip tea, and take in the breathtaking views of snow-capped mountains.

On the afternoon of August 5, a deluge of rain led to a landslide. The Kheer Gad stream, which flows through the village, swelled up with debris. Within seconds, the floodwaters swallowed the multi-storey hotels and homestays offering river views. A blanket of sludge, piled as high as 30-40 m, now covers the village, which had a population of less than 1,000 and also a high floating population of tourists. The rumbling noises of earth movers and the thud of spades striking the ground reverberate through the air. There is only devastation as far as the eye can see.

Since the tragedy hit Dharali, the Uttarakhand government has been able to recover only one body. Sixty-nine people remain missing, including nine Army personnel and 25 Nepali workers.

Rescue teams have airlifted around 1,400 people by chopper from the flood-hit site. The government said in a statement that around 150 hotels and homestays, several other establishments, and apple orchards have been destroyed. The State government has formed a three-member team to rehabilitate the residents of Dharali, the latest site to be affected by rain, landslides, and floods in the fragile Himalayan region.

Swept away

Rescue teams say it is next to impossible to retrieve the bodies buried under the mountains of sludge, but they nevertheless persist. A team of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) holds thermal imaging cameras, which detect body heat, and walks through what was once a three-storey hotel. After searching for several minutes, they conclude that there are no signs of life. They proceed to the next location.

Lekhraj Singh's heart sinks when the team moves on. A labourer from the Bijnore district of neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, Lekhraj had come to Dharali to find his son, Yogesh, who had been working at a construction site in the village since May. "My wife and daughters have stopped eating since they heard of the disaster. Yogesh's phone is silent and he has been untraceable since then. I want my son back," Lekhraj says.

Pressing his palms together in prayer and looking at the mountains, he shouts as loud as he can: "Yogesh, are you there?"

Officials ask him to sit in a chopper so that he can be dropped at Uttarkashi town, about 70 kilometres away. Tears stream down Lekhraj's cheeks. "*Bhala ho sarkar ka jo hume do din se roz yaha laati hai* helicopter *me taki hum apne bacche ko khoj sakein* (I am grateful to the government for bringing me for the last two days by chopper here so I can look for my son)," Lekhraj says, as he picks up a mud-covered jute bag carrying two sets of clothes, warmers, and a postcard-sized picture of his son.

> It would have been better if I had died. At least my family would have got some compensation from the government to start life afresh
>
> **SANJAY PANWAR**
> Resident of Dharali

Kali Devi, a construction worker, had gone to the market when the floodwaters hit Dharali. She says her son had dialled her husband when the disaster hit the village. In a video that went viral on social media, a dazed Kali says, "All he could say is that he won't survive. Since then, his phone is not reachable." She has been running from pillar to post to find her husband, her three sons, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren.

Some people have lost their kin and some have lost their land in the tragedy, but Jai Bhagwan Panwar has lost nearly everything he had. The waters swept away his nephew, Akash Panwar, in front of his eyes. His two-storey hotel is nowhere to be seen. His apple orchards have been washed away.

Jai was attending an annual fair, the Hardu Mela, organised for the Hindu god Someshwar, on the outskirts of the village, when he heard the thundering noise of the waters from the Kheer Gad crashing into the village.

"The priest was all set to perform the *aarti* when we heard the noise. People started running and shouting for help. I made frantic calls to my nephew and to workers at my hotel, but I couldn't reach anyone. A girl from Rajasthan was the only guest at my hotel at that moment. She is also missing along with the others," he says. Jai performed the last rites of Akash at his house in Uttarkhasi's Barethi village.

Sanjay Panwar lost his entire life's savings in the floods. He has no idea how is going to repay a loan that he had borrowed from a bank to open an apple drying plant.

"It would have been better if I had died," Sanjay says. "At least my family would have got some compensation from the government to start life afresh."

Living in trauma

Villagers say that the floodwaters hit the village again and again, from 1:45 p.m. to 5 p.m., leaving them traumatised. People with complaints of anxiety and sleeplessness have started making a beeline for the temporary health check-up posts that have been set up by the government.

"The locals say whenever they close their eyes, they feel they are drowning. The trauma is not letting them rest," says Dr. Meghna Aswal, who was on duty at a health post till August 12.

Dr. Aswal found that several pregnant women were depressed thinking of delivery and childcare in the village. She prepared a list of 12 women whose delivery dates were approaching. The women were airlifted to Uttarkashi.

Among them is Radhika Sai, 21, from Nepal, who is nine months pregnant. Radhika worked at an apple orchard in Dharali with her husband Gopal Sai. On the day of the tragedy, she was sitting in her room somewhere up in the hills.

Radhika had planned to go to Nepal for her delivery, but she is now in Uttarkashi with no female family member around. She has developed a skin infection due the dampness. With no undergarments left, Radhika has tied a red stole around her body to support her heavy breasts. She walks around in a daze and with a limp. Her husband Gopal, who is left with only a few hundred rupees, is struggling to find a way to earn some money to afford childcare.

Back to square one

The water in the Kheer Gad stream has not just destroyed Dharali, but also the Army camp in Harshil, another Himalayan village next to it. Officials say the continuous and heavy water flow from Kheer Gad has led to the formation of an artificial lake in Harshil.

Arpan Yaduvanshi, chief of the Uttarakhand SDRF, says 120 Army personnel are working day and night to rescue people at Dharali along with 100 personnel from the National Disaster Response Force, 75 from the SDRF, and 70 from the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). The rescue teams, who have divided the spot into three zones, have deployed tools such as ground penetrating radars, victim locating cameras, and thermal imaging cameras to locate survivors. Dog squads, engineering and medical staff, and scientists and geologists are also at the spot.

> The locals say whenever they close their eyes, they feel they are drowning. The trauma is not letting them rest.
>
> **MEGHNA ASWAL**
> Doctor

Arpan says the biggest challenge in the rescue operation is the water. "It continues to flow beneath the debris. This poses serious risks for the rescue teams. This is also one of the reasons why we are unable to use heavy digging and excavation machines at the spot – their vibrations are too high to be used in this fragile area."

Weather changes have also added to their woes. "Every day, we work for several hours to clear the sludge. Then it rains and everything goes back to being what it was. We keep coming back to square one," explains Arpan. The rains are also hampering helicopter services, leaving the rescue teams with scanty petrol, ration, and equipment for digging, he adds.

The rescue teams are not just struggling in Dharali, but also across the hill in Uttarkashi. Incidents of landslides, and roads getting washed away due to incessant rains, are being reported from multiple spots every day since August 5.

A bridge connecting Dharali and Mukhba, another neighbouring village, has been declared unfit for use by the Army. As a landslide washed away a major portion of the road that connects Gangnani village to Dharali, people now have to trek 12-15 km to reach Dharali by road. Another landslide near Dabrani village halted vehicular movement from Uttarkashi for hours. During road construction near Dharali, an excavator toppled into the river with its driver inside. The driver remains missing.

Amid the strenuous rescue efforts, helicopter pilots make multiple sorties every day, to pick up and drop people from Dharali to the Matli and Chilyanisaur helipads. There are 17 choppers involved in rescue efforts in the region at the moment – five from the Indian Air Force, nine from the Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority, and three from the Army.

At the Matli village helipad, every time a chopper lands, SDRF and ITBP personnel, along with doctors, rush towards it to ensure that those disembarking are fine. The helicopters are filled with rations, bedding, and other essentials, which are distributed across the villages surrounding Dharali. The choppers also airlift critical and injured people to higher centres in Rishikesh and Dehradun.

The built-up area

Environmentalists believe that 'extremely heavy rains' up in the hills caused a landslide and flooding from the Kheer Gad. In their letter to the Environment Ministry after the Dharali disaster, Navin Juyal, a geologist, and Hemant Dhyani, convenor of the Ganga Ahwan Movement, wrote that there has been an influx of tourists in the upper Ganga catchment in recent years. To meet this demand, people have been constructing new hotels and home stays in the hills in defiance of all rules, they said. Both Navin and Hemant served as members of the expert body appointed by the Supreme Court after the 2013 Kedarnath disaster as well as the 2019 High-Powered Committee on the Char Dham road widening project.

"Dharali and similar settlements along the Gangotri highway are built on the debris flow or alluvial fan deposit. In the upper reaches, say above 2,500 metres, the streams are fed by the cirque glaciers or ice packs and tend to carry large volume of paraglacial and landslide generated sediments," they stated.

The two of them claimed that the disaster which struck the village was inevitable. During the Kedarnath disaster in June 2013 too, Dharali had undergone significant damage due to the sediments mobilised by the Kheer Gad, they said. Even after the 2013 disaster, people were not discouraged from going to locations near the stream. A reinforced cement concrete wall was constructed to prevent flood debris from entering the settlement. This encouraged people to build resorts and hotels next to the stream, which explained the extent of the damage, they wrote.

Brijesh Sati, general secretary of the Uttarakhand Teerthpurohit Mahapanchyat, a body of priests of the Char Dham temples, believes that lives were saved because villagers had gathered at the Hardu Mela. "The *aarti* was being performed at the Mela site, so most of the villagers had come there. Had this been a normal day, the loss of lives would have been much higher," he says.

The debris that flowed into the village, which was surrounded by apple orchards, pine trees and mountains, also flattened the oldest monument, the Kalp Kedar temple. According to Hindu mythology, the temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, was built by the Pandavas during their exile. The story goes that Lord Shiva had refused to absolve the Pandavas of their indiscretions.

Brijesh believes that the Kalp Kedar is now back to its original form. He says, "It is said that the Shivling (a symbolic representation of Lord Shiva, often depicted as a smooth, cylindrical stone with a rounded top) in this temple has been hidden beneath the ground for generations. It has never been fully seen. Several excavations were been done at this site, but the Shivling has always remained partially hidden. After the floods, Lord Shiva has again gone beneath the ground. Even the meaning of Kedar is sludge."

Nandan Bisht, a hotelier in Uttarkashi, says about the river, "When rivers decide to claim their course, everything that comes in their way witnesses a similar fate."

ishita.mishra@thehindu.co.in

Landslides continued intermittently even a week after the Dharali tragedy on August 5, hampering relief work. SHASHI SHEKAR KASHYAP

How inclusive is EC's special revision exercise?

A survey across five States and one U.T. shows that the SIR's document requirements are too onerous for most voters; the exercise could lead to a high possibility of voter exclusion

LOKNITI-CSDS SURVEY

Suhas Palshikar
Sanjay Kumar
Sandeep Shastri
Krishangi Sinha

The ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar has led to a discussion that goes beyond a mere update to the voter list. As part of this initiative, discussions have been held on requiring certain proof of identity and citizenship – most notably, the birth certificate – for voter list verification. As the Election Commission continues to insist that its demand for documents is reasonable and that most voters do have at least one of these documents, the issue has assumed critical importance, especially in light of the proposal to expand the SIR exercise to other States. Opponents of the SIR argue that such an exercise will only lead to the exclusion of a large number of voters. In a democracy, the broadest possible inclusion of all eligible persons on the electoral rolls is the most basic requirement of a free and fair election system.

Therefore, finding out which documents voters actually possess, who are the ones less likely to possess such documents, and what might be the proportion of citizens likely to face exclusion from the electoral rolls are critical to assessing the feasibility and inclusivity of the SIR. In a country as socio-economically and geographically diverse as India, documentation access varies widely due to differences in administrative infrastructure, historical record-keeping, literacy levels, and public awareness. Above all, the State-level capacity and practice of record-keeping and the process of making documents easily available to citizens are variables that may result in exclusion in some States more than in others.

Lokniti-CSDS conducted a study across Assam, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and the National Capital Territory of Delhi to understand the types of documents people possess and their views on making the birth certificate and other documents compulsory for voter verification.

The larger picture

In spite of the ongoing debate in the media, only a little over one-third (36%) of respondents from our entire sample were aware of the SIR exercise or the documents that are required. More than half of the respondents said they do not have a birth certificate. At least two in five did not have a domicile certificate or a caste certificate. As required by the SIR, those born after 1987 have an additional responsibility of having citizenship proof of at least one of their parents (and for both parents if born after 2003). Data from the survey show that this is a far more difficult condition to fulfil for the vast majority of the respondents. While at least two-thirds said they did not have their parents' birth certificates, a similar proportion said they had neither a Secondary School Certificate (SSC) nor a caste certificate.

How does this lack of necessary documents pan out across the States?

Clearly, it will exclude some citizens and more importantly, citizens from weaker sections in particular will have to keep running from pillar to post to obtain the documents or face exclusion.

Roughly 5% of respondents did not have any of the 11 documents mandated by the EC. While there are slightly more women than men in this category of "No Document Citizens", three-fourths of them are from the lower half of the economic order, while more than one-fourth are SC and over 40% are OBC.

Birth certificate

The proportion of respondents having a birth certificate issued by a local or government authority varies widely, as highlighted in **Table 4**. At the lower end, Madhya Pradesh records only 11%, indicating large documentation gaps. Assam (36%) and Kerala (38%) fall in the mid-range, while Delhi (44%) and West Bengal (49%) are slightly better. Even in these States, at the higher end, at least half of the respondents do not have the document.

Within households, as shown in **Table 5**, the coverage of birth certificates among members aged above 18 remains low. Only Kerala and West Bengal report that three in 10 households have all adult members with a certificate, while in Madhya Pradesh, just 2% reported the same, and close to four in 10 say none of the adults have it. Assam and Uttar Pradesh also show low full-coverage rates – 14% and 12%, respectively. Is it really easy to obtain a birth certificate? If the requirements were made mandatory, exclusion risks would be high in some States, as highlighted in **Table 6**.

In Kerala, four in 10 believe they would not be able to obtain the certificate, and in Madhya Pradesh, over one-third say the same. Even in States with somewhat higher current possession rates, such as Delhi and Assam, around one-fifth foresee being unable to comply. Difficulty in obtaining such certificates is most pronounced in Delhi (46% "very difficult"), followed by Kerala (41%), Madhya Pradesh (40%), and West Bengal (41%). Very few in any State reported already having all necessary documents (**Table 7**).

When looking at other forms of identification, the possession of educational and domicile-related documents varies sharply across States. The Class 10 certificate is most common in Kerala (85%), followed by Delhi (68%), West Bengal (66%), and Assam (61%). Uttar Pradesh is slightly lower at 56%, while Madhya Pradesh records the lowest share (40%). Domicile certificates show a similar disparity. The highest reporting is in Kerala (65%) and the lowest in West Bengal (35%), with Delhi at 57%, Uttar Pradesh (55%), Madhya Pradesh (51%), and Assam slightly lower at 49%. Possession of caste certificates ranges from 65% in Kerala and 60% in Assam to just 19% in West Bengal. Madhya Pradesh records 51%, Delhi 51%, and Uttar Pradesh 48%. National Register of Citizens documents are only relevant in Assam, where possession is near-universal (96%) (**Table 8**).

The inclusion of all eligible persons on the electoral rolls is fundamental to a democracy

Special-category documents such as forest rights certificates, land allotment certificates, or family registration certificates are unevenly distributed. Assam and Kerala show higher possession of some of these, while Delhi and States such as Uttar Pradesh have minimal coverage, implying that these cannot serve as universal substitutes (**Table 9**).

Government-issued identity cards or pension orders are most common in Kerala (74%) and West Bengal (50%), while it is 43% in Assam and 37% in Madhya Pradesh. The possession of these documents is extremely low in Uttar Pradesh (10%) and Delhi (4%). Pre-1987 government or Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) identity documents are scarce in all States, with West Bengal recording the highest at 27%, followed by Assam (19%), Kerala (18%), Madhya Pradesh (13%), Delhi (3%), and Uttar Pradesh (1%) (**Table 10**).

Overall, the possession of most documents varies sharply by State. Aadhaar is the only exception, being near-universal and consistent across regions, yet it was excluded by the EC from use in the SIR exercise in Bihar. This exclusion could create a significant barrier for voters, particularly in States where alternative documents are rare, region-specific, or unevenly distributed, making a fixed, nationally applied SIR-eligible list risk disproportionately disenfranchising certain populations.

The absence of parental birth certificates is especially high in Madhya Pradesh (87% for both parents) and significant in Uttar Pradesh (72% mothers, 64% fathers) and West Bengal (68% mothers, 70% fathers). Assam and Kerala have comparatively lower absence rates, around 56% to 60% for mothers and 52% to 57% for fathers, but still represent more than half of the respondents. SSC certificate possession shows a similar pattern: Madhya Pradesh again records the highest absence (87% mothers, 78% fathers), with substantial gaps in Uttar Pradesh (68% mothers, 55% fathers) and Assam (64% mothers, 59% fathers). Kerala stands out with far lower absence for mothers (31%) and fathers (37%). For caste certificates, the highest absence is in West Bengal (76% mothers, 74% fathers) and Madhya Pradesh (72% mothers, 63% fathers). Assam and Kerala again record relatively lower absence rates (around 37% to 43%) (**Table 11**). Overall, the data show that in many States, large numbers of people lack these parental documents, particularly in Madhya Pradesh and parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Challenge of inclusivity

The above findings point to some important issues. As part of updating the electoral rolls and ensuring that errors of commission and omission are avoided, it is crucial that the review process offers a solution to the challenges faced rather than adding to the complications. Firstly, it is clear from the survey that there is a significant variation across States on individuals having the documents required under the current SIR process. Taking forward the exercise within the current framework of requirements could pose a serious challenge for many of those who have a legitimate right to be part of the voters' list.

The challenges in this regard are on account of multiple factors – the capacity of the Indian state (government authorities in general) to make available such documents and the inherent limitations in the record-keeping function, multiple barriers faced by individuals to secure the required documents and the inability to produce documents that needed to have been collected by the previous generation. While cleansing of the electoral rolls is important, the exercise, as it is currently being undertaken, is likely to lead to the deletion of many legitimate names on the grounds that they are unable to provide the necessary documents. Above all, the data here draw attention to the most critical dimension – citizens' access to and possession of many documents being very limited.

It then becomes about the willingness of and special efforts by government authorities to include all citizens in its record-keeping function.

(Suhas Palshikar taught political science and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics; Krishangi Sinha is a researcher with Lokniti-CSDS; Sandeep Shastri is director-Academics, NITTE Education Trust and national coordinator of the Lokniti Network; and Sanjay Kumar is professor and co-director, Lokniti-CSDS)

On file

Table 1: Awareness level

Heard about SIR	%
Yes, in detail	17
Yes, have heard but not sure about details	36
No, not heard at all	47

All figures have been rounded off. Question asked: Currently, the Election Commission is conducting SIR in Bihar. Have you heard about it?

Table 2: Overall document unavailability

Document	%
Birth certificate	52
Domicile certificate	41
Caste certificate	42
Mother's birth certificate	70
Father's birth certificate	66
Mother's caste certificate	60
Father's caste certificate	54
Mother's SSC certificate	66
Father's SSC certificate	58

All figures have been rounded off. The figures will not add up to 100 as the figures represent only the respondents who said "No" to having the mentioned documents.

Table 3: Unavailable documents with respondents

Document	%
No passport	52
No passport and no caste certificate	22
No passport, no caste certificate, and no SSC	13
No document	5

Others did not have passport, caste certificate, SSC, BPL, birth certificate, domicile certificate, family certificate, any pension or govt. document by Union or State government or PSU, State, or Central identity card issued before July 1, 1987, forest right certificate, land/house allotment certificate.

Paper trail: (Clockwise from top) A Block Level Officer (BLO) checks SIR documents in Purnia district of Bihar; checking of documents in Araria district; an electronic voting machine; a BLO hands over an enumeration form to an elderly voter; and an advertisement van for the SIR exercise. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP, PTI

Table 4: Issuance of birth certificate

State/U.T.	Yes	Not by local/ government authority	No
Assam	36	13	51
Kerala	38	12	49
Madhya Pradesh	11	15	70
Uttar Pradesh	29	10	56
West Bengal	49	10	36
Delhi	44	6	48

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. Question asked: Do you have a birth certificate issued by a local or government authority?

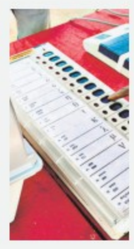
Table 5: Family members above the age of 18 who have birth certificate

State/U.T.	Yes, all have	Yes, but only a few	None have
Assam	14	63	22
Kerala	30	61	7
Madhya Pradesh	2	37	39
Uttar Pradesh	12	40	35
West Bengal	30	41	24
Delhi	22	53	19

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off.

Table 6: Effect of mandatory birth certificate

State/U.T.	Effect of mandatory birth certificate		
	No problem	Slight difficulty but manageable	Won't be able to get it made
Assam	31	37	21
Kerala	38	19	39
Madhya Pradesh	9	36	34
Uttar Pradesh	24	40	22
West Bengal	47	16	23
Delhi	35	30	30



All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. Others did not know. Question asked: If the Election Commission makes it mandatory to show a birth certificate in order to remain on the voter list, how would this affect voters like you?

Table 7: Level of difficulty in obtaining certificates

State/ U.T.	Level of difficulty				
	Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Not much	Not at all	Already have all necessary documents
Assam	22	46	20	8	2
Kerala	41	16	12	18	11
M.P.	40	36	8	1	3
U.P.	35	37	14	3	5
W.B.	41	22	8	10	10
Delhi	46	36	6	3	8

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. Others did not know. Question asked: How difficult is it for a voter like you to obtain such certificates that the Election Commission is asking?

Table 8: Availability of Class 10 certificate, domicile certificate, caste certificate, NRC document

State/U.T.	Document			
	Class 10 certificate	Domicile certificate	Caste certificate	NRC document
Assam	61	49	60	96
Kerala	85	65	65	N/A
M.P.	40	51	51	N/A
Uttar Pradesh	56	55	48	N/A
West Bengal	66	35	19	N/A
Delhi	68	57	51	N/A

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. The figures represent only the respondents who said "yes" to having the mentioned documents.

Table 9: Availability of forest right certificate, family registration certificate, land/house allotment certificate

State/U.T.	Document		
	Forest right certificate	Family registration certificate	Land/ house allotment certificate
Assam	22	33	75
Kerala	>1	61	72
Madhya Pradesh	11	49	33
Uttar Pradesh	>1	6	10
West Bengal	2	13	48
Delhi	1	15	22

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. The figures represent only the respondents who said "yes" to having the mentioned documents.

Table 10: Availability of government-issued identity card or pension order, government/PSU identity document issued before July 1, 1987

State/U.T.	Document	
	Government-issued identity card or pension order	Government/PSU identity document issued before July 1, 1987
Assam	43	19
Kerala	74	18
M.P.	37	13
U.P.	10	1
West Bengal	50	27
Delhi	4	3

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. The figures represent only the respondents who said "yes" to having the mentioned documents. (Question asked: Do you have the following documents - Government-issued identity card or pension order, government/PSU identity document issued before July 1, 1987?)

Table 11: Absence of documents of parents

Documents	State/U.T.					
	Assam	Kerala	M.P.	U.P.	W.B.	Delhi
Birth certificate of mother	60	56	87	72	68	67
Birth certificate of father	52	57	87	64	70	58
SSC certificate of mother	64	31	87	68	64	62
SSC certificate of father	59	37	78	55	62	47
Caste certificate of mother	43	37	72	63	76	59
Caste certificate of father	40	40	63	54	74	50

All figures are in percentages and have been rounded off. The figures represent only the respondents who said "no" to having the mentioned documents. In other words, the numbers show the % of respondents' parents who do not have the mentioned documents.

Method note for the survey

The study was conducted by Lokniti-CSDS in NCR-Delhi and five States, namely Assam, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

In each State, five districts were purposively selected, keeping in mind the rural and urban population in each of these five districts. In each of the five districts, four locations were selected keeping in mind the class profile of the people living in these locations, so that the sample has adequate representation of people from lower, middle- and upper-income classes.

At each location, 25 face-to-face interviews were conducted with those respondents who were 18 years or more.

Respondents at sampled locations were selected following a random walk procedure. At the location, field investigators identified a landmark such as school, hospital, or any monument and started to select households from there. They did interviews in such a way that the entire location was covered, leaving a few houses between the sampled households. The method comes very close to simple random selection of the voters for the interview.

Total sample for which data have been analysed is 3,054; roughly 500 interviews in each State. The sample represented people belonging to different social profiles – 44% were women, 48% urban voters, 18% Dalits, 7% Adivasi, 12% Muslims, and 5% Christians (Christians in Kerala sample).

Zelenskyy seeks Indian help to end Ukraine war

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Offering his congratulations on Independence Day, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a pitch on Friday for India to play a role in resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In a message posted three hours before the meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his U.S. counterpart, Donald Trump, in Alaska, Mr. Zelenskyy referred to his call with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 11, and said India and Ukraine "share the experience of standing up for freedom and dignity, as well as the pursuit of peace and development".

"We hope that India will contribute to efforts aimed at ending the war, so that our freedom and sovereignty are truly secure," Mr. Zelenskyy added, indicating an outreach to New Delhi, at a time when Ukraine is worried about the outcome of the Trump-Putin talks.

While Ukraine and the European Union have called for peace, but without ceding any territory to Russia, Mr. Trump has said that he expected some "land swaps" on the agenda for any ceasefire agreement with Mr. Putin.

Meanwhile, New Delhi has hoped cautiously for some sort of Trump-Putin agreement leading to Ukraine-Russia talks on a ceasefire, so that the 25% penalty tariffs placed by the U.S. on Indian goods can be rolled back before they go into place on August 27.

Unlike previous occasions, Mr. Zelenskyy did not mention the issue of India's purchase of Russian oil, which has been a sore point between the two countries.

After their telephone conversation on August 11, Mr. Zelenskyy had said that he told Mr. Modi it was "necessary to limit the export of Russian energy, particularly oil" which helps finance the war.

U.S. and India will rise to modern challenges together, says Rubio

Press Trust of India
NEW YORK/WASHINGTON

India and the U.S., "working together", would rise to the modern challenges of today and ensure a brighter future for both countries, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, describing the "historic relationship" between New Delhi and Washington as "consequential and far-reaching." On behalf of the U.S., Mr. Rubio extended warm wishes to the people of India on the occasion of Independence Day on Friday.

"The historic relationship between the world's largest democracy and the world's oldest democracy is consequential and far-reaching," Mr. Rubio said.

He said the two countries were united by "our shared vision for a more peaceful, and secure Indo-Pacific region" and the partnership spanned industries, pushed the boundaries of critical and emerging technologies, and extended into space.

From Page One

PM calls for self-reliance, flags 'demographic plot'

The Prime Minister announced two major task forces, one to initiate second generation reforms of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, eight years after its introduction, and a high powered task force for next generation economic reforms.

"You will get a Deepavali gift, the task force on second generation GST reforms will result in major relief in prices of essential goods," he said. In a bid to boost employment generation, he said the government would create a new corpus of ₹1 lakh crore, the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana, which would give a ₹15,000 one-time grant to first-time employees in the private sector, and incentives to the private sector to create employment. The government also aims to reduce the compliance cost for medium, small, and micro enterprises (MSMEs), hoping the relief from fear of arbitrary legal actions will give a fillip to a sector that creates jobs.

"India will launch 'Made-in-India' semiconductor chips by the end of 2025," Mr. Modi said. He emphasised the need for innovation in AI, cyber security, deep-tech, and operating systems for global competitiveness. Six semiconductor units are already on the ground, and four new units have been given the green signal, he said.

Mr. Modi made a mention of the anti-Naxal operations especially in Chattisgarh where he said terror corridors had now become green corridors. He did, however, warn of a "conspiracy to change the demographic character" of the country, especially in border areas. He announced the establishment of a High Powered Demographic Mission to deal with the challenges posed by this issue.

Repeating that he would stand like a wall between the world and the interests of Indian farmers, a reflection on U.S. demands in its tariff negotiations with India, the Prime Minister said the need of the hour was to reduce fertilizer dependency on other countries.

The address also made history for its 103-minute duration, being the longest August 15 speech by any Prime Minister of independent India, and also breaking Mr. Modi's own 98-minute record.

GST overhaul with fewer slabs planned

It added that the GST Council would deliberate in its next meeting – likely be held in September or October, according to sources – on the recommendations of the GoM and would strive to implement the bulk of the reforms within this financial year.

The Centre would be engaging with the States over the next few weeks to achieve a consensus on these reforms. The reason the Centre had to put forth such a proposal in the first place, a source confirmed, was because the GoM tasked with simplifying the GST only comprises representatives of the States.

"Even though the Centre is part of the GST Council, it has no voice when it comes to these changes, such as rate rationalisation or what happens with insurance," a source explained. "And so we had to submit our proposal to the GoM." It is now up to the States to accept or reject the proposals, the source added.

Revenue impact

According to sources, the 28% tax slab currently accounts for 11% of the revenue from the GST, the 12% slab accounts for 5%, and the 5% slab accounts for 7% of the revenue. The bulk of the revenue – around 67% – comes from the 18% slab.

The Centre has also proposed that the rates on aspirational items, such as white goods, would be reduced. Air conditioners are currently taxed at 28%, which will see a reduction, while other white goods currently taxed at 18% could potentially see their rates reduced as well. This includes daily-use items such as toothpaste, soap, and shampoo.

The source added that there would be only five to seven "sin goods", such as tobacco and gutka, in the 40% category, while the concessional rate of less than 1% would apply to the few items that are currently taxed below 5%. These include precious metals like gold and silver.

Yet again, plastic treaty talks end in stalemate

However the countries opposed to them, which also includes China, represent a larger share of the world's population.

Several of the Arab states, the United States and India are also against any curbs on the production of plastic polymers.

"We came to Geneva to secure a global plastics treaty because we know the stakes could not be higher," Jessika Roswall, European Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, said in a statement. "While the latest text does not meet all our ambitions, it is a step forward. The perfect must not be the enemy of the good."

Inger Andersen, Executive Chairperson, UN Environment Programme, at a press conference said, "I am disappointed...but this is how the multilateral treaty works. History shows that it takes multiple years of negotiations to evolve the substantial treaties of the past. We have for the first time heard the deep red lines been mentioned in a true way that will enable a pathway for us to move forward."

India to build indigenous air defence system by 2035: PM

'Sudarshan Chakra' aims at providing complete security for strategic and civilian areas, such as hospitals and railway stations; national security cannot rest on foreign dependence, says Modi

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

India will develop an indigenous air defence system by 2035 not just to neutralise enemy attacks, but also to hit back strongly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his Independence Day address on Friday. The mission, announced on the eve of Krishna Jayanti, will be called 'Sudarshan Chakra' in honour of Lord Krishna's mythological shield.

"By 2035, all the important places of the nation, which include strategic as well as civilian areas, like hospitals, railways, any centre of faith, will be given complete security cover through new platforms of technology. This security shield should keep expanding, every citizen of the country should feel safe," Mr. Modi said.

"Whatever technology comes to attack us, our technology should prove to be better than that and hence, in the coming 10 years, I want to expand this national security shield, strengthen it, modernise it," the Prime Minister said.

Military asset: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with NCC cadets at Red Fort in New Delhi on Friday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Missile systems

India currently has three S-400 missile systems developed by Russia, which played a crucial role in taking down Pakistani drones and missiles fired towards more than 15 Indian cities in retaliation for Operation Sindoor in May. India's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) played a pivotal role in maintaining air superiority over Pakistan.

Mr. Modi hailed Operation Sindoor as a landmark demonstration of India's strategic autonomy and self-reliance in defence. The armed forces had used 'Made-in-India' weapons during the operation to dismantle terror networks and Pakistan-based infrastructure, he said, signalling an era where India rejects nuclear blackmail and foreign-imposed terms.

"Indigenous capabilities allow India to act decisively and independently. National security cannot rest on foreign dependence," he declared, calling self-reliance the bedrock of strength, dignity, and the journey to a developed India by 2047.

On the Indus Waters Treaty, the Prime Minister was unequivocal: "Blood and water will not flow together. The Treaty was unjust – our farmers suffered while enemy lands were irrigated. India will no longer compromise on national interests."

He underlined self-reliant India as a core pillar of Viksit Bharat, warning against the "dangerous habit" of dependence. "Self-reliance is not just about exports, imports, the rupee, or the dollar – it is about our ability to stand on our own," he said.

Calling on innovators and youth to develop indigenous jet engines, he drew parallels with India's COVID-19 vaccine success and the UPI revolution. "Our scientists and youth must take it up as a direct challenge," he urged.

Mr. Modi also celebrated Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla's achievements in space.

Terror attacks must not dictate J&K's future, says Omar

Press Trust of India
SRINAGAR

Omar Abdullah

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday delivered a forceful Independence Day speech, criticising the practice of linking terror attacks to Jammu and Kashmir's political future and asserting that Pakistan should not be allowed to influence it through terrorism.

In his first speech since Jammu and Kashmir was downgraded to a Union Territory, he announced a signature campaign would be launched to press the demand for restoration of Statehood.

Mr. Abdullah's remarks came a day after a Supreme Court Bench, led by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai, said "incidents like Pahalgam" must be considered when deciding on Statehood.

Pakistani terrorists killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists, in the Baisaran meadow in south Kashmir's Pahalgam on April 22. In his speech at Bakshi Stadium here, Mr. Abdullah termed the reference to Pahalgam "unfortunate" and directly challenged the idea of letting terror dictate the region's political future. He asked, "Will the killers of Pahalgam and their masters in the neighbouring country decide whether we will be a State?"

"Every time we are close to Statehood, they will do something to sabotage it. Is this fair? Why are we being punished for a crime in which we had no role?" the Chief Minister questioned, pointing that residents from Kathua to Kupwara protested against the attack of their own will.

Mr. Abdullah asserted that successive governments in Jammu and Kashmir progressively brought down militancy.

Praise for RSS marks Modi's strategic messaging

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

In an Independence Day speech headlined by announcements of economic and policy reforms, against the backdrop of tariffs imposed on India by U.S. President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dished out pointed messaging aimed at his party and the Opposition.

Terming the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), ideological parent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), as possibly the "world's biggest NGO", Mr. Modi lauded the organisation, which turns hundred this year, for its work, calling it a golden chapter in India's history. "Today I want to mention one thing with great pride that 100 years ago an organisation was born – the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Its 100 years of national service has been a very proud and glorious page," the Prime Minister said, for the first time, referring to the RSS in his Independence Day address.

The message is being seen as significant not just because it is the 100th anniversary of the RSS and that Mr. Modi has been its full-time *pracharak*, but also because of the 14-month wait for the RSS and the BJP to decide on a national president for the party.

Sources say that both sides are holding onto their positions on who should be the next BJP president – someone completely aligned with the party's current leadership or closer to the RSS?

PM terms RSS, which turns hundred this year, as possibly the 'world's biggest NGO'

This is the second time Mr. Modi has praised the RSS in recent times. Earlier, he termed the organisation as a "banyan tree" giving shelter, at a function in Nagpur.

"Prime Minister Modi's words point to the fact that, while there are differences, there are no fundamental or ideological issues between the RSS and the BJP, rather more to do with organisational and human resource-related," said a senior Union Minister.

Hot-button issue

The mention of a National Demographic Mission to tackle illegal immigration, especially in border areas, is significant as it plays into the BJP's agenda for long.

The current drive to identify undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants especially in Assam and West Bengal, States that will be going to polls early next year, coupled with the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, makes this a hot-button issue for the BJP. "When demographic change happens, especially in border areas, it creates a crisis for national security. A challenge for unity, integrity and progress. It sows the seeds for social tension. No country can hand over itself to infiltrators. How can India do that?" Mr. Modi asked.

On the charge by the Opposition that the BJP government would "change the Constitution", Mr. Modi said people remember how "the Constitution was murdered" and who "murdered" it. On another charge that the BJP was a party of mainly Hindi speakers and represented them, Mr. Modi spoke at length about the beauty of all Indian languages.

In his 103-minute speech, Mr. Modi may have appeared to be consumed with policy reforms but his messaging on domestic politics, and within his own ideological sphere was also something that stood out.

Women are key drivers of India's growth, says Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that women in India were not only beneficiaries of a rising economy but also its key drivers.

"From start-ups to the space sector, from the playing fields to the armed forces, our daughters are making their mark. Today, with pride, women stand shoulder to shoulder in the country's journey of development," Mr. Modi said.

"Every sector now proudly acknowledges the strength of our *nari shakti* [women's power]," he said.

Opposition hits out at poster by Oil Ministry

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress objected to an Independence Day poster released by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas featuring V.D. Savarkar alongside Mahatma Gandhi and other freedom fighters for allegedly elevating a "British mercy petitioner like Savarkar over the Father of the Nation."

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said it was yet another attempt to "distort" history and make heroes out of "traitors".

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on X posted a picture featuring Savarkar, Gandhiji, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Bhagat Singh with the caption – "Freedom was their gift, shaping the future is our mission".

Hitting out at the government, Mr. Venugopal said: "This Orwellian image, elevating a British mercy petitioner like Savarkar over Gandhiji, and completely eliminating Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patelji, shows their contempt for our freedom fighters."

BJP will go to any extent of immorality to remain in power, alleges Kharge

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

Hoisting the National Flag at the Congress party's new headquarters, Indira Bhavan, on the 79th Independence Day, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday focused on the party's recent campaign against alleged electoral malpractices and called it a fight to "save democracy".

He accused the BJP of willing to go to "any extent of immorality to remain in power" and claimed that Opposition votes were being openly cut in the name of special intensive revision (SIR) of Bihar electoral rolls by declaring those alive as dead.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

'Fight for democracy'

The Congress chief claimed that the BJP did not have any objection to names of 65 lakh people being removed from the electoral rolls and this showed who benefited from the SIR exercise. "This is not a fight to win elections but to save India's democracy and protect the Constitution," Mr. Kharge said in the presence of party colleagues, including Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi.

"Now the ruling party is ready to go to any extent of immorality to remain in power. Large-scale irregularities are coming to light in elections," he alleged, referring to Mr. Gandhi's recent allegation of fake voters in one Assembly segment of a Lok Sabha seat in Karnataka.

"We have similar concerns regarding the Maharashtra Assembly election results. The party is closely studying such seats. In due time, this will be presented to the public," Mr. Kharge added. He urged his colleagues and party workers to obtain voters' list in their respective booth and check the details minutely.

Targeting the Narendra Modi-government's performance in the past 11 years, he mentioned increasing unemployment, constitutional institutions being filled with ideologically aligned people, and misusing agencies like the ED, Income Tax, and CBI to target opponents.

PM's Independence Day speech meant to appease RSS: Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Jairam Ramesh

The Congress on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi praising the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in his Independence Day speech was a "blatant breach" of the constitutional spirit and an attempt to appease the Sangh before he turns 75.

The party was referring to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent statement that leaders should step aside on attaining 75 years of age.

"The most troubling element of the PM's speech today was his name-checking of the RSS from the ramparts of the Red Fort – a blatant breach of the spirit of a constitutional, secular republic. It is nothing but a desperate attempt to appease the organisation in the run-up to his 75th birthday next month," Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"Decisively weakened after the events of June 4th, 2024 [when the BJP won the Lok Sabha election, but fell short of majority], he is now at their [RSS] complete mercy and reliant on Mohan Bhagwat's good offices for the extension of his tenure post-September. This politicisation of Independence Day for personal and organisational gain is deeply corrosive to our democratic ethos," Mr. Ramesh said, adding, "The PM was tired today. Soon he will be retired."

The Congress leader said Mr. Modi's speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort was "stale, hypocritical, insipid". He also said the claims of empowering States ring hollow when the Centre continued to "erode federalism, marginalise elected State governments, and throttle or topple Opposition-run governments". He said the rhetoric on protecting farmers had become "hollow and unbelievable".

INBRIEF

10 killed, 35 injured as bus hits truck in West Bengal town

Ten pilgrims from Bihar died and 35 others were injured as their bus rammed a truck parked on the roadside in West Bengal's Burdwan town on Friday, officials said. The pilgrims, from Motihari in Bihar's East Champaran district, were returning home after visiting Gangasagar in South 24 Parganas when the accident happened on NH-19 in Purba Burdwan, they said. Eight men and two women comprised the deceased, they added. The injured persons, including six children, were admitted to Burdwan Medical College and Hospital, officials said. "There were 45 people on the bus. Efforts are being made to contact their families," an official said. PTI

Six killed as vehicle collides with truck in Chhattisgarh

Six men were killed and one was injured in a road accident in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon on Friday, according to police. The victims were travelling from Indore in Madhya Pradesh to Puri in Odisha via Chhattisgarh when the multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) they were in hit a road divider, vaulted over it and collided with a truck going in the opposite direction on the Raipur-Nagpur National Highway around 5.30 p.m., said a police officer. The officer added that the driver, Sagar Yadav, had been driving non-stop for over 12 hours and may have lost control because he was sleepy. He also said it was raining in the area when the accident occurred.

Farmers and yoga teachers special invitees at I-Day event

Recognising their contributions in the fields of yoga and cultivation of medicinal plants, the Union government invited 100 yoga volunteers/ instructors associated with the International Day of Yoga celebrations and 100 best-performing farmers engaged in the conservation, development, and sustainable management of medicinal plants as special invitees to the 79th Independence Day event at the Red Fort on Friday. In his message to the group, Union Minister Prataprao Jadhav said that farmers are the backbone of our nation and that yoga experts continue to guide us towards health, harmony, and inner strength.

Defend Assamese identity, don't stay silent: Himanta

Northeastern States defied a boycott call by extremist groups and celebrated the country's 79th Independence Day peacefully, barring a stray incident in Meghalaya's capital, Shillong. In their Independence Day speeches, the Chief Ministers of the region outlined their plans. While most were upbeat, Assam's Himanta Biswa Sarma warned about a future where Assamese people would be at the mercy of "unknown people" unless they defend their identity. "We, the Assamese, cannot stay silent, or else we will lose our race, land, and hearth in 10 years. About 80% of our Ministers will be unknown people within 15 years...," he said.

Toll in Kishtwar flash floods rises to 60; nearly 70 missing

Multi-agency search continues in Chisoti village; 167 injured rescued; two CISF personnel among the dead; J&K CM says he will examine if there was any lapse on the part of the administration

Press Trust of India
KISHTWAR/JAMMU

Braving intermittent rain, rescuers intensified their search for survivors in a cloudburst-hit village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district on Friday, even as Chief Minister Omar Abdullah put the death toll in the tragic incident at 60.

Disaster struck Chisoti, the last motorable village on the way to the Machail Mata temple, around 12.25 p.m. on Thursday. Rescuers pulled out 46 bodies, including that of two Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel, on Thursday.

A total of 167 injured people were rescued, while 69 others were reported missing by their relatives. The cloudburst set off flash floods when a large number of people had gathered in the village for the annual pilgrimage to the Machail Mata temple.

The pilgrimage began on July 25 and was to end on September 5. The 8.5-km trek to the shrine, which is at an elevation of 9,500 feet, begins from Chisoti, located about 90 km from Kishtwar town.

The yatra remained suspended for the second day on Friday.

Tragic loss: Relatives mourn over the death of a victim following cloudburst at Chisoti village in Kishtwar on Friday. IMRAN NISSAR

The deluge flattened a market, a community kitchen for the pilgrims and a security outpost, besides damaging houses and vehicles.

Addressing an Independence Day function at Srinagar's Bakshi Stadium, Mr. Abdullah said that in the coming days, "we will have to figure out why this happened. Was there any lapse on the part of the administration, because we already had a weather forecast [about the possibility of heavy rains and flash floods]".

"Could we have taken more steps from the government and the administration to save those precious lives? We have to make ourselves accountable," he added.

Government sets up control room

KISHTWAR/JAMMU
The Union Territory administration has set up a control room-cum-help desk in Padder, about 15 km from Chisoti, to assist people. Five officials have been put on duty here. The helpline numbers to the control room are — 9858223125, 6006701934, 9797504078, 8492886895, 8493801381, and 7006463710.

Wall of dargah near Humayun's Tomb collapses; six killed

Alisha Dutta
Suruchi Kumari
NEW DELHI

Six people died and five others were injured after a portion of a wall and roof of Dargah Masjid Pattawali in New Delhi collapsed on Friday amid heavy rains. The dargah is located near the boundary wall of the 16th century Humayun's Tomb, a UNESCO world heritage site, but is not part of the complex.

At least 12 people were in the dargah when the incident occurred, including several who had come to see the visiting Imam Mohammed Rafi.

Several teams from Delhi Police, Delhi Fire Services, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and National Disaster Response Force reached the spot for rescue operations, which lasted for about four hours.

"The dargah is neither a part of the tomb complex nor is it on the premises of the ASI-monitored property. However, the gates of the tomb were opened to facilitate rescue operations," said R.K. Patel, the Superintending Archaeologist of the ASI's Delhi circuit.

Rescue personnel at the site of a wall collapse near Humayun's Tomb on Friday.

"Nine people were sent to AIIMS trauma centre, out of which five were declared dead by the hospital, while others are under observation. The one person sent to LNJP [Lok Nayak Hospital] was declared brought dead, while another person is being treated at RML [Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital]," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) Hemant Tiwari.

Govt. proposal in 2024 for a panel on 'demographic challenges' never took off

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a High-Powered Demography Mission on Friday. However, a similar committee announced before the 2024 Lok Sabha Election was never formed.

In her Interim Budget speech on February 1, 2024, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said the committee will be constituted to consider the challenges arising from "fast population growth and demographic changes." The terms of reference and composition of the panel were never notified.

On Friday, in his Independence Day speech, Mr. Modi said the "demography of the country is being changed as part of a conspiracy and a well-planned plot" and the mission will do its work in a well thought-out and definite manner in the stipulated time to deal with "this grave crisis that is looming over India".

The Census, which gives a clear picture of migration and demographic changes, was last done in the year 2011 and the next population count is expected in 2027.

There is no accurate data on population shifts but the police have flagged the issue at many forums

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) – the average number of children per woman – in the country has remained constant at 2.0 in 2021, the same as in 2020, according to the Sample Registration System (SRS) report for 2021 released by the Registrar General of India on May 7. Bihar has reported the highest TFR at 3.0, while Delhi and West Bengal reported the lowest TFR of 1.4.

Though there is no accurate data on demographic changes, police and security agencies have been regularly flagging the issue at various forums.

During the annual Director General of Police conference in 2021, which was presided over by the Prime Minister, police officers from Uttar Pradesh and Assam submitted a research paper flagging demographic changes in districts along the international border with Nepal and Bangladesh.

The compendium of reports compiled by the Intelligence Bureau, which was later pulled down from its website in 2022, said the police had submitted essays highlighting the ongoing demographic changes in the bordering States.

"These have been prepared with the help of data collected through Census exercises, National Family and Health Surveys, local surveys, data enumerated by going through voters' list, etc. However, the thrust remains on the overall demographic changes. These changes in the bordering belt is presenting a big challenge to national security, particularly at the level of border villages and bordering sub-divisions," the report said.

SC Collegium cannot dictate names to HC Collegiums, says CJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai on Friday clarified that the powerful Supreme Court Collegium, which he heads, cannot "dictate" names to High Court Collegiums for judicial appointments.

"Even the Supreme Court Collegium cannot dictate the High Court Collegium to recommend the names," Chief Justice Gavai said in his Independence Day address at a function organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on the court's lawns.

The CJI said the High Court Collegiums take the "first call" on who they would want as their fellow judges. At most, the CJI said, the top court Collegium could "recommend" names to its counterparts in the High Courts.

He said in a federal judiciary, the Supreme Court and the High Courts were neither superior nor inferior to each other.

He was responding to a representation made by SCBA president, senior advocate Vikas Singh, to widen the pool of selection for prospective High Court judges, and consider picking legal talent from lawyers practising in the Supreme Court.

CJI B.R. Gavai

The demand from the Bar leader and the response from the CJI has come at a time when the High Courts are facing 345 vacancies as on August 1. Out of a total working judicial strength of 1,122 judges, there are only 777 judges on the Benches of the 25 State High Courts across the country.

Recent data published by the Supreme Court showed that 29 recommendations made by the Supreme Court Collegium to State High Courts since November 9, 2022 were pending with the government.

India must contribute to world peace, says RSS chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said Indians should not be complacent about having attained independence.

"Our ancestors made supreme sacrifices for our independence. We too need to work equally hard to keep this freedom alive and make our country self-confident and emerge as a global leader," he said at an event in Bhubaneswar. He said the country must contribute to the world's prosperity and peace.

Noting that *swatantra* (independence) is a combination of two words, *swa* (self) and *tantra* (governance), the RSS chief said the country had become independent and people were now running the government.

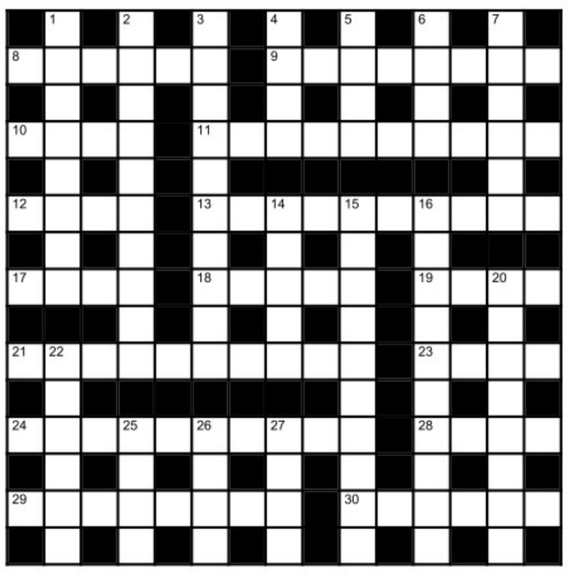
He said there were environmental issues and quarrels across the world. "Under such a situation, it is India's duty to guide others, resolve issues and make the world peaceful and prosperous as a Vishwa Guru," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14565

(set by Afterdark)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Spartan prophet touring Vatican with energy (6)
9 In a way, I've need to collect challan first as proof (8)
10 Karma is nothing; trifle? Gutted (4)
11 Distant viewing devices made of steel carried by a policeman at Spain (10)
12 Announced a small subsidy (4)
13 Pleasure to mention people in text, first off (10)
17 Really, if the tail's cut short on book, it will denote a word of action (4)
18 Remove eaters, primarily they should be out in a heap (5)
19 Firm's time has value (4)
21 Say, biologists work on insects, its characters (10)
23 Neglect Naomi, try somewhat (4)
24 Popular clues? Fuss about collection (10)
28 Say, Jack has vehicle at the end of the road (4)
29 Edward sweeps all around part of the houses (8)
30 Move once, other way round, primarily decide to stretch (6)

Down

1 Isolated new apes to assess (8)
2 Honest deal penned to collect billions, nothing new to be confused (10)
3 Payment to community (10)
4 Narrate well, avoid introduction, begin on time (4)
5 Poses with appeal in ship (4)
6 Raze road in the middle, make it nothing (4)
7 Blind guard (6)
14 Refuses to talk on marine creatures (5)
15 In their normal condition, on vessel met, assembled around hospital (10)
16 Scientific device created crime scoop (10)
20 Prison band is lively (8)
22 Auditor practices principles (6)
25 My daughter's bond (4)
26 Sleet is special at present (4)
27 Swimmer's provided return to keep quiet (4)

SUDOKU

8			7					6
2	3	6			4	7		8
						3		
	8	1	3					
6			4		8			7
					7	1	8	
		8						
4		3	8			5	6	1
5					6			2

No.SS6613 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

A		E		C		A			E		E		R	A
T	A	K	E	O	F	F		P	O	M	P	O	U	S
O		E		D		F		I		U		O		T
P	I	O	N	E	E	R		D	I	L	E	M	M	A
I		U				A		E		S		M		T
C	A	T	A	C	L	Y	S	M		I	R	A	Q	I
				L				I		F		T		N
C	A	S	T	O	F	F		C	H	I	N	E	S	E
O		O		U		I				E				
L	I	N	E	D			G	A	S	T	R	O	P	U	B
D		I		B		U		U				R		A
C	O	N	Q	U	E	R		B	E	R	L	I	O	Z
A		L		R		I		T		U		M		A
L	I	A	I	S	O	N		L	O	B	E	L	I	A
L		W		T		E		E		Y		Y		R

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	7	9	6	1	5	3	4	2
4	6	5	3	2	9	8	7	1
2	1	3	8	7	4	5	9	6
6	4	8	2	9	1	7	3	5
9	5	1	7	3	8	2	6	4
3	2	7	5	4	6	9	1	8
5	9	6	4	8	7	1	2	3
1	8	2	9	6	3	4	5	7
7	3	4	1	5	2	6	8	9

FAITH

The charioteer and guide

Janmashtami commemorates the birth of Lord Krishna, one of the most significant Gods of Hinduism. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan saw Lord Krishna not merely as a historical figure but also as a symbol of love and devotion. Krishna's life and teaching reflect profound philosophical and ethical truths. The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches us humanism, harmony, equanimity, tolerance, detachment, and adherence to dharma, said Prof. Kumool Abbi.

Janmashtami falls on the Ashtami tithi of Krishnapaksha in the month of Bhadrapad on the Rohini nakshatra. Krishna is regarded as the eighth avatar of Vishnu. The birth of Balgopal took place with miraculous celestial intervention. Kamsa, the king of Mathura, was the brother of Devaki. It had been prophesied that the eighth child of Devaki would lead to the death of the evil Kamsa. So Devaki and her husband Vasudev were imprisoned with orders to kill all their newborns. When Devaki was about to give birth to Krishna on a stormy night, divine intervention put Mathura to sleep, and Vasudev saved baby Krishna from Kamsa by handing him over to Yashoda and Nanda, thereby paving the way for Kamsa's destruction and of evil.

Janmashtami is celebrated across the country and the diaspora. This day is marked by fasting and keeping a vigil till midnight. Tales from Krishna's childhood are narrated to children. The day is spent recalling his teachings, reciting from the *Bhagavad Gita*, and singing kirtans.

Krishna's counsel to Arjuna is crystallised as the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the wisdom of the divine charioteer (Krishna) is a guide to navigating the complexities of existence in the contemporary world.

INBRIEF

Mahindra displays 4 concept SUVs eyeing global markets

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. unveiled four concept SUVs to be introduced in the market between 2027-2030. The vehicles, to be developed on the firm's all-new modular, multi-energy NU_IQ platform, will include ICE and EVs. The vehicles are targeted at the global market, firm's officials said. Mahindra is already exporting to South Africa and Australia and EVs are being exported to the U.K. So, these vehicles, in the first phase, will be introduced in these markets.

RSB Retail India files draft IPO papers to raise ₹1,500 crore

RSB Retail India Ltd., a multi-brand retail chain in south India, has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator SEBI for an initial public offering (IPO) and people familiar with the matter indicated the issue could raise around ₹1,500 crore. The proposed IPO is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to ₹500 crore and an offer for sale of up to 2.98 crore equity shares by promoters, as per the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). PTI

Enforcement Directorate searches Vuenow Infratech

India's financial crime fighting agency searched the premises of Vuenow group of firms, including Vuenow Infratech, director Rahul Anand Bhargav and other related people and entities, it said. The search was conducted at premises across Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra for money laundering charges, said the Enforcement Directorate (ED). It seized cash, electronic devices, 'incriminating records', shares and immovable property worth ₹737.2 million ($8.4 million), the ED said. REUTERS

Why Maharashtra's small, marginal farmers are rejoicing over U.K. FTA

Collective farming is helping thousands of small and marginal farmers in the grape capital of India to reap benefits of international markets; Farmer Producer Company (FPC) Sahyadri Farms exports 22,000 metric tonne of grapes 30% of which goes to the United Kingdom market

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

Big boost: Small, marginal farmers with land holdings of 1-6 acre in Nashik have reaped benefits via collective farming. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

In Nilwande village, 50 km from Nashik, 35-year-old Chhaya Thete wakes up early morning to send her children to a private English medium school. Tiffin packed, meals cooked, she then heads to her farm to see if the stems in her vineyard have changed colour. Due to unseasonal rain, she is worried about diseases on the leaves and if the yield might reduce.

But there is one thing she looks up to this year - more income on export quality grapes. She is excited about the India - U.K. Free Trade Agreement, (FTA) whereby Indian grapes can enter U.K. duty-free. For Thete, with a marginal holding of almost two acre, it promises better income, standard of living and disposable income.

Nashik district is called the grape capital of India. In 2023-24, India exported over 3 lakh metric tonne of grapes, valued at over $400 million. Maharashtra is its biggest producer. U.K. has consistently been one of our top importers. And most of the harvest goes to the European market.

With the FTA, Indian grapes will now become more competitive in the European market and stand a better chance among competitors like South Africa and Chile exporting to the U.K. sans tariffs. Indian grapes were levied an 8% tariff earlier but for small and marginal farmers, a majority in India, the chance of exploiting the opportunity comes with collective farming.

Over the last decade or so, Thete and her husband Dnyaneshwar Thete, have repaid a bank loan, bought more land for grape cultivation and built a small bungalow on the land where a thatched roof once stood. She cultivates exclusive varieties of grapes like Ara. And she is not alone

In the neighbouring village, Vijay Wadje (49) and his young son are equally excited. They have been cultivating some exclusive grape varieties for export for a while now. And the experience of sending it for export has been different from local sales.

"I have been in grape farming for 25 years now. Earlier, I used to cultivate *Sonaka* variety and sell the produce in the domestic market. But not only did I get a poor rate, the income was also not fixed. We had to pack the grapes ourselves and take them to the trader who would hardly ever pay on time. But then, over a decade ago, I saw people around me cultivate Thompson variety. I saw them prosper.

"So I decided to try my hand at it. And since then, there has been no looking back. Today, I cultivate Thompson, Ara varieties.

"The produce goes to the company. We get timely payment as per the quality of the produce. There is strict testing and quality control. The higher the quality of my grapes, the better the price." He owns 2.5 acre and each acre gives him 100 quintals. Each kg earns him ₹60-₹100, based on quality.

His son Rahul Wadje (23) joined his father three years ago while doing a part-time agriculture diploma. He is one of the few youngsters who want to continue farming while others are looking for jobs.

"I want to continue farming. But it is not sufficient. I want to simultaneously start an agriculture-allied business like providing hardware or mulching paper for agriculture," he said. He has been consciously carrying out experiments in the farm to improve the quality and is acutely aware of the strict quality control norms farmers have to follow for the produce to pass stringent export norms.

"We test our soil five times a year. We also test our vineyard regularly. The petiole testing is crucial. The European market is very strict. They test taste, colour, variation. They want each berry to be the same size, to have the same taste and colour. They don't want chemicals in the grapes. We follow all the international norms. Our grapes are the best quality for eating. Even we eat them right from the vineyard. If we buy grapes from the market, we need to wash them thoroughly. But that is not the consideration for the export quality grapes we grow."

The secret behind the change in fortune is collective farming. They are all a part of the 14,000 farmers associated with a Farmer Producer Company (FPC) - Sahyadri Farms. In a country where over 90% farmers are small and marginal farmers, the collective has given them bargaining power and strength to generate volumes to compete in international markets.

'Do or die' situation

"We are in a do-or-die situation when it comes to being competitive in the international market. The only solution for a country where most of the farmers have less than one hectare land is collective farming. Without this, we can't create our ecosystem and can't make it profitable. That ecosystem should be competitive at a global level. Then only can there be real prosperity," said Vilas Shinde, CMD, Sahyadri Farms which is one of the leading FPCs and the largest grape exporter in India with a 17% market share. It grows more than 30 new varieties, including 19 patented varieties. In 2025, Sahyadri logged more than ₹1,900 crore sales. Over 14,000 farmers are associated with Sahyadri for grape production.

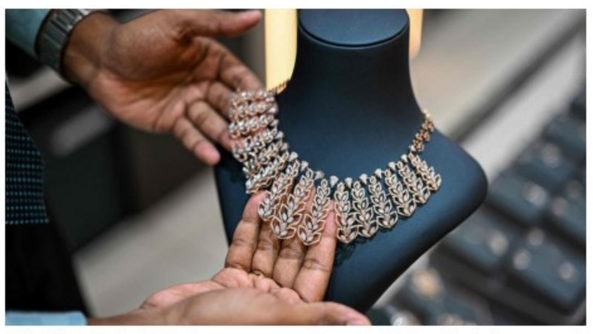
The FPC said the FTA will lead to at least 15% better returns for the farmers.

"For grapes, India will have great advantages. Volume will rise due to fair competition. Along with grapes, there will be bigger opportunities for other horticulture commodities viz. pomegranate, mango, citrus fruits. It will lead to end-to-end ecosystem, improving standards for customer requirement. This will lead to greater learning which will help farmers not just in the U.K., but in other markets like Japan, U.S. It will help in domestic market as well. The demand for premium fruits is increasing. Food safety-related standards will force the farmer community to give better quality," he said.

Every year, Sahyadri exports 22,000 metric tonne of grapes 30% of which goes to the U.K. market.

U.S. has no alternative to India in diamonds, say industry leaders

Abhinay Deshpande
AHMEDABAD



Top client: The U.S. alone accounts for over 30% of India's gem and jewellery exports, making it the single-largest overseas buyer. AFP

Already grappling with job losses and a slowdown in orders, Gujarat's diamond sector has been dealt with another setback as the U.S. its largest export destination, raised import duties to 25% with an additional tariff of 25% coming into effect from August 27, taking the total to 50%.

The hike, announced by U.S. President Donald Trump, has raised concerns among exporters who warn the rates are "unsustainable" for long-term trade.

Mounting challenges

It comes at a time when the industry is still struggling with the fallout of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the growing presence of cheaper lab-grown diamonds in global markets.

Despite the grim statistics, some leaders are urging calm. "This is a temporary phase. The U.S. has no viable alternative to India for loose and jewellery diamonds," said Jagdish Khunt, president, Surat Diamond Association.

"Yes, tariffs are a blow, but it will eventually push prices up in the U.S. and buyers there will have to absorb the difference because sourcing from India remains unavoidable," he told *The Hindu*.

Industry estimates show the U.S. alone accounts for more than 30% of India's gem and jewellery exports, making it the single-largest overseas buyer. In Gujarat, where almost 90% of natural diamonds imported to India are cut and polished, trade bodies say more than one lakh workers have lost jobs since April this year.

In May, the Gujarat government rolled out a relief scheme aimed at helping diamond artisans and small units hit by a global slowdown. More than one lakh former workers from the sector sought assistance under the programme offering ₹13,500 a child of affected families.

"Nearly 90% of India's supply is processed here. What other alternatives do they have? We have the best *'ratnakalakars'* (diamond artisans) in the world, and a customer buying diamonds will never compromise on quality," says Mr. Khunt.

He compared the American affinity for diamonds to the Indian love for gold, noting just as Indians continue to buy gold despite soaring prices, U.S. consumers were steadfast in preference for diamonds.

Choosing diamonds

"No matter the circumstances, they pick diamonds over gold. We expect the market to steady ahead of Christmas and New Year, with fresh orders starting to flow in," he said, adding over 7.5 lakh artisans are working in 3,500 small, large units.

Data from the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), India's apex body for the industry, shows in 2024-25 fiscal year, India shipped cut and polished diamonds worth $4.8 billion to the U.S.. The U.S. market thus accounted for over a third of India's total diamond exports amounting to $13.2 billion for the year. As per GJEPC, India's rough diamond imports fell sharply in 2024-25 to $9.52 billion, down from $14.26 billion in the previous fiscal.

Babu Vaghani, president, Lab-Grown Diamonds Association, shared Mr. Khunt's optimism, describing the current situation as "short-term crisis."

"Whatever the challenges, we must keep going until Diwali. Even if it means trading on smaller margins, work has to continue for the sake of lakhs of people who depend on it for their livelihood," he added.

Mr. Vaghani pointed out more than half the artisans outside Surat, particularly in Bhavnagar, Botad, Mehsana, and other districts, were women. "In rural areas, women play a major role in diamond polishing," he added.

Amitava Mukherjee

NMDC eyeing 55 MT iron ore output in FY26: CMD

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

State-owned NMDC is eyeing a record 55 million tonne (MT) iron ore output in the current fiscal.

In 2024-25, the company's output of the key raw material for steel stood at 44.04 MT, while in the previous fiscal it touched a record 45.2 MT. For the quarter ended June in FY26, the production was more than 30% higher year-on-year at 11.99 MT.

"We are firmly targeting 55 million tonne in FY26. By reaching this milestone we can stay on course for our 100 million-tonne goal by 2030," CMD Amitava Mukherjee told a gathering on the occasion of Independence Day celebrations at its corporate office here.

August, for NMDC Steel, he said, was turning out to be a month of milestones with the firm producing 11,205 tonne of hot metal in a single day; reporting ₹25.7 crore profit after tax for June quarter and successfully rolling out 1.2 mm thick hot rolled coil.

"NSL has inherited this deep sense of responsibility to the people and the planet from NMDC," Mr. Mukherjee said about the demerged entity.

THE HINDU

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SEOUL

Putin hails North Korean troops as 'heroic' in letter to Kim Jong-un

AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed North Korean troops sent to fight in Ukraine as "heroic" in a letter to Kim Jong-un, North Korean state media reported on Friday. In a letter marking the anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese rule, Mr. Putin recalled how Soviet Red Army units and North Korean forces fought together. AFP

PESHAWAR

Several dead in Pakistan as heavy rains trigger flash floods, landslides

AP

Heavy monsoon rains triggered landslides and flash floods across a remote region of northern Pakistan, killing at least 117 people in the last 24 hours, disaster authorities said on Friday. The majority of the deaths, 110, were recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). AFP

PRETORIA

Ramaphosa seeks public dialogue, unity to fix 'broken' South Africa

AFP

President Cyril Ramaphosa urged South Africans to join hands and find solutions to the country's many problems, launching a months-long "national dialogue" on Friday dismissed by critics as a costly talk shop. Africa's most industrialised nation is still grappling with poverty and inequality 30 years after the end of apartheid. AFP

ISTANBUL

Dozens of opposition members in Turkiye arrested: media reports

AFP

Turkish police arrested 44 people on Friday in the opposition stronghold of Istanbul, including Beyoglu Mayor Inan Guney and several of his close aides, the *Anadolu* news agency reported. The arrests, over alleged corruption, is part of a months-long crackdown targeting the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). AFP

Trump, Putin shake hands ahead of Ukraine talks at Alaska summit

Previously planned one-on-one meet is now a three-on-three meeting that will include Secretary of State Marco Rubio and special envoy Steve Witkoff; Putin to be joined by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Foreign Affairs Adviser Yuri Ushakov

Associated Press
ALASKA

U.S. President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin shook hands warmly at the start of their Alaska summit on Friday before heading into hours of discussions that could reshape the war in Ukraine and relations between Moscow and Washington.

The leaders greeted each other on the tarmac at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, where officials erected a special stage, with a large "Alaska 2025" sign flanked by parked fighter jets and red carpets. Uniformed military members stood at attention nearby. B-2s and F-22s – military aircraft designed to oppose Russia during the Cold War – were flying over to mark the moment.

Reaching out: Donald Trump, right, greets Vladimir Putin at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska on Friday. AP

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the previously planned one-on-one meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin is now a three-on-three meeting that will include Secretary of State Marco Rubio and special envoy Steve Witkoff. Mr. Putin will be joined by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Foreign Affairs Adviser Yuri Ushakov. The change indicates that the White House is taking a more guarded approach than it did during a 2018 meeting in Helsinki, when Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin first met privately just with their interpreters for two hours.

Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump are expected to hold a joint press conference at the end of the summit.

The sit-down gives Mr. Trump a chance to prove to the world that he is both a master dealmaker and a global peacemaker. He and his allies have cast him as a heavyweight negotiator who can find a way to bring the slaughter to a close – something he used to boast he could do quickly.

For Mr. Putin, a summit with Mr. Trump offers a long-sought opportunity to try to negotiate a deal that would cement Russia's gains, block Kyiv's bid to join the NATO military alliance and eventually pull Ukraine back into Moscow's orbit. Despite having so much at stake, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders are not invited.

There are significant risks for Trump. By Mr. bringing Putin onto U.S. soil the President is giving him the validation he desires after his ostracisation following his invasion of Ukraine three-and-a-half-years ago.

Ahead of the summit, Mr. Trump spoke with Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of Mr. Putin, by telephone on Friday.

Belarus has backed Mr. Putin's invasion of Ukraine and allowed Russia's Army to use its territory as a launchpad for its first wave of attacks in early 2022.

Mr. Trump said he had thanked Mr. Lukashenko for freeing political prisoners and said that the two sides were "discussing the release of 1,300 additional prisoners".

Ben-Gvir confronts jailed Palestinian leader Barghouti

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir published a video on Friday showing him confronting the most high-profile Palestinian detainee in Israeli custody in his prison cell.

Marwan Barghouti, a leading member of the Palestinian Fatah party, has spent more than 20 years behind bars after being sentenced for his role in anti-Israeli attacks in the early 2000s.

In the clip published by Mr. Ben Gvir on X, the Minister and two other individuals, including a prison guard, surround Mr. Barghouti in a corner of his cell.

"You will not defeat us. Whoever harms the people of Israel, whoever kills children, whoever kills women... we will erase them," Mr. Ben Gvir says in Hebrew.

Marwan Barghouti is seen at Jerusalem's court in 2012. AP

Mr. Barghouti tries to respond but is interrupted by Mr. Ben Gvir, who says: "No, you know this. And it's been the case throughout history."

Sources close to Mr. Ben Gvir said the meeting took place "by chance" in Ganot prison in southern Israel during an inspection visit by the Minister, but they would not say when the footage was filmed.

"This morning I read that various 'senior officials' in the Palestinian Authority didn't quite like what I said to arch-terrorist Marwan Barghouti – may his name be erased," Mr. Ben Gvir said in the post accompanying the video on Friday morning.

"So I will repeat it again and again, without apology: whoever messes with the people of Israel, whoever murders our children, whoever murders our women – we will wipe them out. With God's help."

'Palestinian Mandela'

Mr. Barghouti, who is now in his sixties, was arrested in 2002 by Israel and sentenced to life in 2004 on murder charges.

He often tops opinion polls of popular Palestinian leaders and is sometimes described by his supporters as the 'Palestinian Mandela'.

In a statement released by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, the Palestinian Authority's Foreign Ministry denounced the confrontation as "an unprecedented provocation".

China says it opposes European sanctions over Iran nuclear programme

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China said on Friday it opposed invoking sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme after three Western nations told the UN they would reimpose them if no diplomatic solution was found by the end of August.

European sanctions on Iran were eased after a 2015 deal in return for curbs on Tehran's nuclear programme.

But on Wednesday, Foreign Ministers from the E3 group – Britain, France and Germany – threatened to reimpose them in a joint letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council.

China said on Friday it "opposes invoking" sanctions and "believes that it does not help parties build trust". Reimposing sanctions was "not conducive to the diplomatic effort for the resumption of talks", Beijing's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

European countries have stepped up warnings to Iran about its suspension of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

That came after Israel launched a 12-day war with Iran in June, partly seeking to destroy its nuclear capability. The U.S. staged its own bombing raid during the war. The E3 letter sets out engagements that the ministers say Iran has breached, including piling up uranium stock to more than 40 times the permitted level under the 2015 deal. "The E3 remain fully committed to a diplomatic resolution to the crisis caused by Iran's nuclear programme," the Ministers said.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Tender No.	Material Description	Due date
252613 003475	Procurement of Debarked Acacia pulpwood from open market sources of Kerala to TNPL Unit - I at Kagithapuram.	29.08.2025
252613 003476	Procurement of Debarked Senna pulpwood from open market sources of Tamilnadu to TNPL Unit - I at Kagithapuram.	30.08.2025

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website only. Detailed Terms & conditions, tender fee, EMD etc., are available in the tender document which can be downloaded from website: **www.tnpl.com**

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Taliban condemn Afghans 'ungrateful' for Islamic rule

Associated Press
ISLAMABAD

Taliban's leader Hibatullah Akhundzada warned God would severely punish Afghans who are "ungrateful" for Islamic rule in the country, according to a statement released on Friday marking the fourth anniversary of the Taliban's return to power.

The Taliban seized Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, as the U.S. and NATO withdrew their forces at the end of a two-decade war.

Since then, they have imposed their interpretation of Islamic law on daily life, including sweeping restrictions on women and girls, based on edicts from Akhundzada.

The Taliban leader, who is seldom seen in public, said in a statement that Afghans had endured hardships and made sacrifices for almost 50 years so that Islamic law, or Sharia, could be established.

Sharia had saved people from "corruption, oppression, usurpation, drugs, theft, robbery, and plunder."

Poster of late Taliban leader Mullah Omar seen at celebrations marking four years since Taliban takeover in Kabul on Friday. AFP

His statement was shared on the social platform X by the Taliban's chief spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid.

"These are great divine blessings that our people should not forget and, during the commemoration of Victory Day (August 15), express great gratitude to Allah so that the blessings will increase," said Akhundzada.

"If, against God's will, we fail to express gratitude and are ungrateful for them, we will be subjected to the severe punishment by Allah."

He also instructed the Cabinet and Ministers to drop the word "acting" from their job titles, signifying the permanence of a Taliban administration in Afghanistan and the lack of challengers to their rule.

Indoor protest

Members of the United Afghan Women's Movement for Freedom staged an indoor protest on Friday in northeast Takhar province against Taliban rule.

The country is gripped by a humanitarian crisis made worse by climate change, millions of Afghans expelled from Iran and Pakistan, and a sharp drop in donor funding. This year's anniversary celebrations are more muted than last year's, when the Taliban staged a military parade at a U.S. airbase.

French PM Bayrou slams 'anti-Semitic hatred'

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou on Friday condemned an act of "anti-Semitic hatred" after a memorial tree planted in tribute to a young French Jewish man tortured to death in 2006 had been cut downoutside Paris.

On January 20, 23-year-old Ilan Halimi, was kidnapped and tortured in the Paris suburb of Bagneux. Found three weeks later, he died on the way to hospital. An olive tree, planted in 2011 in his memory, was cut down overnight Wednesday in Epinay-sur-Seine, officials said.

The move stoked fresh concerns about increase in hate crime against Jewish people in France.

"The tree for Ilan Halimi, a living bulwark against oblivion, has been cut down by anti-Semitic hatred," Mr. Bayrou said on X on Friday. Paris police chief Laurent Nunez said a probe has been launched into what he called a "despicable act".

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION (ISRO)
ISRO TELEMETRY TRACKING AND COMMAND NETWORK (ISTRAC),
CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP (CMG)
Peenya Industrial Estate, Bengaluru-560 058.

BRIEF E-TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of the President of India, sealed item rate e-tenders are invited online from contractors of appropriate class for the following work in NIT by Group Head, ISTRAC, ISRO, Peenya, Bengaluru-560 058 (Phone No. 080-28094541, 28094186).

Name of work	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 10kWP (minimum capacity) to 50kWP (maximum capacity) capacity (totalling to 380kWP) rooftop Solar Power Plant at various location of ISTRAC, ISRO
E-tenders Notice	ISTRAC/CMG/E/CON/E-Tender-51/2025-2026 dated 14.08.2025
Estimated Cost put to tender	Rs. 230.00 Lakhs
Tender document details	E-tenders
Period of completion in months reckoned from the 15th day of date of issue of work order	Six (06) months
Period during which the tender document can be downloaded	From 16.00 hrs. on 16.08.2025 to 06.09.2025 till 16.00 hrs.
Bid clarification	From 11.00 hrs. on 17.08.2025 to 07.09.2025 till 16.00 hrs.
Last date and time of reply to bid clarification	08.09.2025 up to 16.00 hrs.
Last date and time for receipt of tenders	09.09.2025 up to 16.00 hrs.
Due date and time of opening of tenders	11.09.2025 after 11.00 hrs.
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 4,60,000/-

Interested tenderers may please refer Detailed Notice Inviting tender (NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details from website: **www.isro.gov.in** and download the tender document from **www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO**

Sd/- Group Head, CMG

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN : U40109KA1999SGC025521)

No. CEE/T&P/SE-1/2025-26/4382-96 Date: 14.08.2025

BRIEF SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(THROUGH KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)

Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited invites Bids on electronic mode for the following works against following enquiry numbers on **Total/Partial Turnkey basis.**

Sl No.	Enquiry No. Name of the work
1	**KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT2525** Construction of 220kV Outdoor GIS line Bay at existing 220/66/11kV **Chikkanagara** Sub-Station and running of 220kV, 1000sqmm XLPE UG Cable (3 Runs) for a distance of **0.038kms** from 220kV Chikkanagara Sub-station in SakleshpuraTaluk, Hassan District along with construction of 220kV SC OH line using 220kV NBT DC/MC Towers for a distance of **2.123kms** from 220kV Chikkanagara Sub-Station to the proposed Railway traction Sub-Station at Sakleshpura in SakleshpuraTaluk, Hassan District for arranging power supply to an extent of 40 MVA on 220kV basis in favour of DRM(TRD), SWR Mysuru Division, Mysuru.
2	**KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT2524** Establishing 2x12.5 MVA, **66/11KV Sub-Station** at **Siddapura (Beeticadu)** and Construction 66kV DC line on DC towers from the existing 66/11kV Virajpete Sub-Station to the proposed 66/11kV Siddapura Sub-Station for a distance of **14.201 kms** and Construction of **2 No of 66kV Terminal Bays** at 66/11kV Virajpete Sub-Station in VirajpeteTaluk, Kodagu District.

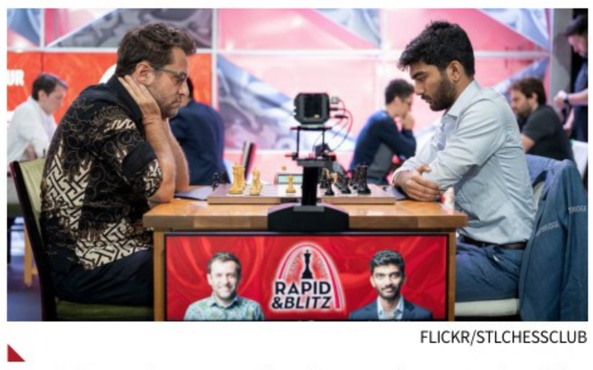
The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink "E Procurement KPTCL" or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **20.08.2025 @ 15:00hrs.** Last date & time for receipt of Bids **03.09.2025 @ 15:00hrs** for the work mentioned at Sl.No. (1) and last date & time for receipt of Bids is **10.09.2025 @ 15:00hrs** for the work mentioned at Sl.No. (2). **Any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the Karnataka Public Procurement portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, Electy.,
Tendering & Procurement, KPTCL, 3rd Floor,
Kaveri Bhavan, Bengaluru-560 009. Tel: 080 – 22274744

BLITZ PHASE

Gukesh slips to tied sixth place; Aronian takes the sole lead



FLICKR/STLCHESSCLUB

D. Gukesh scored one win and four draws on the opening day of the Blitz round to slip to joint sixth spot in the St. Louis Rapid and Blitz chess tournament. Levon Aronian took the sole lead, scoring six out of nine points, and is sitting pretty in the event ahead of overnight leader and compatriot Fabiano Caruana.

FRESH PERSPECTIVE

He changed the way I look at the game: Root on coach McCullum

GETTY IMAGES

Joe Root outlined the impact head coach Brendon McCullum had on his style of play. "He has changed the way I look at the game. I've got less technical and tried to manage the game better. It has been very refreshing to have someone with a very different perspective. He's been brilliant," Root said as quoted from *ESPNcricinfo.*

NEW ROLE

IOC appoints Bindra as Mental Health Ambassador for athletes

ANI

Abhinav Bindra has been named one of nine IOC mental health ambassadors, the IOC announced on Friday. Bindra had been part of the working group since its inception a few years back. Mental Health Ambassadors are tasked with breaking stigma, encouraging open conversation and promoting well-being within sport.

NOT A CAKEWALK

Getting into the LA Olympics T20I team is a tricky affair: Smith

R.V MOORTHY

Steve Smith admitted that breaking into the T20I squad for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics will be "tricky" affair. However, Smith isn't willing to go down without putting up a fight, reported *Sky Sports.* "It is a goal of mine. The team's doing pretty well at the moment. So I've got to keep putting my best foot forward," said Smith.

Keymer remains undefeated; Pranesh wins Challengers crown

The German downs Robson in the final round to take his tally to seven points; Mendonca and Abhimanyu's losses help the Indian GM walk away with the title; Anish, Arjun and Karthikeyan finish joint second in the Masters section

CHESS

C. Shyam Sundar
CHENNAI

Say chess! Pranesh and Keymer will be elated with their triumphant campaigns. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

German Vincent Keymer capped a memorable triumph in the Quantbox Chennai Grandmasters chess tournament 2025 with a convincing win in the final round of the Masters section over American GM Ray Robson here on Friday.

As unstoppable as Keymer was in the tournament, Indian GM M. Pranesh emerged champion in the Challenger category, though he suffered a defeat at the hands of IM G.B. Harshavardhan in the ninth and final round.

Pranesh was helped by the fact that title contenders Leon Luke Mendonca and Abhimanyu Puranik fell to B. Adhiban and Pa. Iniyan, respectively.

In the Masters event, Keymer's defeat of Robson enabled him to finish unbeaten in the tournament (seven points).

During his splendid run here, the 20-year-old also entered the top 10 in world ranking (live ratings) for the first time in his career.

"I think this is my best performance in a classical tournament. It's just a very nice feeling to play good chess, and the event has gone fantastically. I do have the habit of ruining very nice tournaments. I was dangerously close to repeating that same mistake yesterday [Thursday]. Very glad I didn't go that far," said Keymer.

Keymer pounced on a mid-game error from Robson to turn an equal game in his favour.

The German GM then closed out the match quickly to register his fifth win of the championship.

Meanwhile, Dutchman Anish Giri snapped his eight-game draw streak, outwitting compatriot Jorden van Foreest.

The win allowed Anish to finish joint second, along with India's Arjun Erigaisi and Karthikeyan Murali, who played out a 49-move draw in the final round.

Action in the Challengers section kept the goodly crowd interested for the major part of the day.

After the thrills and spills and chaos, Pranesh was crowned the champion.

During his splendid run here, Keymer also entered the top 10 in world ranking (live ratings) for the first time in his career.

The results:

Ninth and final round:

Masters: Arjun Erigaisi (5) drew with Karthikeyan Murali (5); Awonder Liang (USA, 4.5) drew with Vidit Gujrathi (4); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 4) lost to Anish Giri (Ned, 5); Ray Robson (USA, 3) lost to Vincent Keymer (Ger, 7); Nihal Sarin (4.5) bt V. Pranav (3).

Challengers: M. Pranesh (6.5) lost to G.B. Harshavardhan (4); Aryan Chopra (4) bt D. Harika (1.5); Diptayan Ghosh (4.5) bt R. Vaishali (1); Pa. Iniyan (5.5) bt Abhimanyu Puranik (6); B. Adhiban (6) bt Leon Luke Mendonca (6).

Final standings:

Masters: 1. Keymer, 2. Anish, Arjun, Karthikeyan, 5. Nihal, Liang, 7. Vidit, van Foreest, 9. Pranav, Robson.

Challengers: 1. Pranesh, 2. Adhiban, Abhimanyu, Mendonca, 5. Iniyan, 6. Diptayan, 7. Harshavardhan, Aryan, 9. Harika, 10. Vaishali.

Goal is to win the world title, says Pranesh

Breezing through challenges: Pranesh climbed the ladder fighting several odds and became GM at 16. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

C. Shyam Sundar
CHENNAI

The focus was on Masters section in the Quantbox Chennai Grandmasters chess tournament with the Challengers battling it out seemingly unnoticed. On the final day, there was some riveting action in the event with M. Pranesh coming out on top after several twists and turns.

The 18-year-old Pranesh, who entered the final day on Friday, half-a-point ahead of nearest rivals – Leon Luke Mendonca and Abhimanyu Puranik – needing a win to seal the title. Pressure probably got to him as he went down rather tamely to G. B. Harshavardhan, the only IM in the tournament. Lady luck seemed to smile on him as Mendonca and Abhimanyu couldn't post wins, handing the Tamil Nadu lad the big prize and a spot in the Masters category in next year's championship.

Overcoming difficulties

Pranesh has overcome several odds in his quest for glory in the sport. Hailing from Karaikudi, he made light of hailing from an economically backward family and rose through the ranks. Having started playing at the age of five, he won a clutch of titles in national age-group events and capped it by becoming a GM at the age of 16.

He was pretty chuffed at winning the Challengers category in the Chennai GM tournament. "I am very happy to have won despite losing in the last round."

He rated the win over Pa. Iniyan in the third round as his best match of the tournament.

And, he is not ready to rest on his laurels. He is currently at 2589 ELO and wants to scale 2600 and hit 2700 at the earliest. "Ultimately, the goal is to win the world title," Pranesh, said sounding confident about his abilities.

Coming into the event in Chennai, he participated in a tournament in Brasov (Romania) and finished second behind compatriot Karthik Venkataraman.

His coach R.B. Ramesh is delighted to see him claim the top prize in the prestigious tournament. "Happy to see Pranesh winning the event, an important breakthrough at a crucial time. Qualifying for Masters is icing on the cake," he said.

On his part, Pranesh, who counts R. Praggnanandhaa and Aravindh Chithambaram as his good friends, said he wanted to work on his openings.

Sathiyan.

Sathiyan wins second WTT Feeder title

Sports Bureau

India's G. Sathiyan defeated top seed Ryoichi Yoshiyama of Japan 11-4, 11-6, 12-10 in the final to win the men's singles title at World Table Tennis Feeder in Vientiane, Laos, on Friday. This was Sathiyan's second Feeder title and fifth senior crown overall.

"To beat the top seed in three straight games is big. It reassures me that I am still at the top of my game. The way I played the final showed glimpses of the Sathiyan of old (in 2019)," the second seed said.

India-A women seal series victory

CRICKET

Press Trust of India
BRISBANE

Tanuja. FILE PHOTO

Yastika Bhatia, Radha Yadav and Tanuja Kanwar slammed half-centuries as India-A beat Australia-A by two wickets in the second women's one-dayer here on Friday.

India has taken an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series of the multi-format tour.

Chasing the hosts' 265 for nine, built largely on skipper Alyssa Healy's 87-ball 91, India was in doldrums at 193 for seven after losing Yastika (66 off 71 balls) and Radha (60 off 78 balls).

But spin-bowling all-rounder Tanuja batted responsibly for her 50 (57 balls) as India-A won with one delivery remaining. Tanuja forged a 68-run stand for the eighth wicket with Prema Rawat (32 n.o.).

Tanuja was unlucky to be dismissed with the target in sight. But Prema and pacer Titas Sadhu weathered the Australia-A challenge in the final over to score five runs for victory.

Earlier, Healy's departure in the 30th over came as a big setback as the hosts were reduced to 155 for five.

But pace bowling stalwart Kim Garth's 41 at the back end saw the hosts reach near the 270-run mark.

However, it proved insufficient for a victory.

The scores: Australia-A 265/9 in 50 overs (Healy 91, Garth 41 n.o., Minnu 3/46) lost to India-A 266/8 in 49.5 overs (Yastika 66, Radha 60, Tanuja 50, Prema 32 n.o.); **Toss:** Australia-A.

India probables from East Bengal, Bagan to join National camp late

FOOTBALL

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

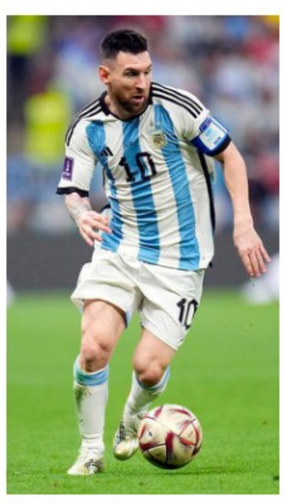
Top players like Liston Colaco of Mohun Bagan Super Giant and Anwar Ali of East Bengal are among the 10 footballers from the Kolkata giants who will be reporting late for the senior national camp due to the ongoing Durand Cup where they are representing their respective clubs.

Seven players from Mohun Bagan, three from East Bengal, two from Jamshedpur FC and one from NorthEast United FC are currently part of the quarterfinals of the Durand Cup.

Bagan's match against East Bengal will be played on Sunday and the losing team is expected to release its players for the camp, while Jamshedpur and NorthEast United too offer a similar scenario.

In case Mohun Bagan goes the distance, then seven of its players will be playing the final on August 23.

Four Bagan players, including Suhail Ahmed Bhatt and Dippendu Biswas, are part of the probables for AFC under-23 Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers from Sept. 3 to 9 in Qatar.



Messi FILE PHOTO

Messi's India tour to begin on December 12

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

Lionel Messi's visit to India has received its final seal of approval with the tour set to kick off in Kolkata on December 12, promoter of the event Satadru Dutta said on Friday.

Kolkata will be the first stop in Messi's whirlwind trip named 'GOAT Tour of India 2025', followed by Ahmedabad, Mumbai and New Delhi. The visit will conclude after a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his residence on December 15.

This will be his first trip to India since 2011, when he visited the country with his national team to play a FIFA friendly against Venezuela.

AIFF counsel to mention ISL impasse before Supreme Court

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) will mention the issue concerning the Indian Super League before the Supreme Court on Monday. The apex court has reserved its judgement on draft AIFF constitution and a hearing is scheduled for Monday.

Hundreds of Indian and foreign footballers are living in uncertainty as the Masters Rights Agreement (MRA) between Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) and the AIFF with regards to Indian Super League is yet to be signed.

The clubs have decided not to pay salaries to the players and support staff till the impasse continues.

"A discussion was held between the legal representatives of the AIFF and the Indian Super League (ISL) clubs, on Thursday, August 14, 2025," AIFF issued a statement on *X*.

"It has been agreed by all parties that the concerns of the ISL clubs pertaining to the delay in the commencement of the 2025-26 ISL season, and the hardship being felt by the players and other stakeholders will be conveyed to the Hon'ble Supreme Court next week, for its kind consideration," it further stated.

In fact, an AIFF source said that they are willing to file a written application if the court asks for one.

"Yes we will be attempting to mention but since judgement is reserved we have to see how the judges takes it. If they feel there is merit in appeal, they may ask for an application to be filed. The plight of the players, clubs and football need to be brought to their notice, " a club source said. The AIFF on Wednesday had asked the legal counsels of the game's apex body and the ISL clubs to "hold discussions" on the teams' concerns.

INBRIEF

Indian skater Anandkumar wins bronze at World Games

India's Anandkumar Velkumar scripted history after clinching a bronze in the men's 1,000m sprint inline speed skating track event at the World Games 2025 in Chengdu on Friday. The 22-year-old Indian clocked 1:22.482 to breeze past Switzerland's Livio Wenger and take the third spot. Spain's Jhoan Sebastian Guzman Bitar won gold in 1:22.288 while Colombia's Jhon Edwar Tascon Holguin took the silver.

Kluivert and Christie to miss Bournemouth's PL opener

Justin Kluivert and Ryan Christie will miss Bournemouth's Premier League season-opener at defending champion Liverpool, manager Andoni Iraola confirmed on Thursday. Kluivert, the team's top-scorer in the league a season ago as the Cherries recorded their highest points total, has missed pre-season games because of a calf injury.

Sidharth Rawat makes the last-four stage

Sidharth Rawat beat Yanki Erel of Turkey 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the $30,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Bali on Friday. In last-four, Sidharth will meet France's top seed Arthur Gea.

The results: €91,250 Challenger, Todi (Italy): Doubles: Quarterfinals: Arjun Kadhe & Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Ivan Sabanov & Matej Sabanov (Srb) 6-4, 6-2.
$30,000 ITF men, Bali: Quarterfinals: Sidharth Rawat bt Yanki Erel (Tur) 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; Philip Sekulic (Aus) bt S. Mukund 5-7, 6-3, 6-0.
$15,000 ITF men, Singapore: Doubles: Semifinals: Sora Fukuda & Yamato Sueoka (Jpn) bt Abhinav Sanjeev Shanmugam & Manish Sureshkumar 6-4, 6-2.
$30,000 ITF women, Aldershot (Great Britain): Doubles: Quarterfinals: Martyna Kubka (Pol) & Amelia Rajecki (GBR) bt Alicia Dudeney (GBR) & Ankita Raina 6-1, 3-6, [10-4].
$30,000 ITF women, Bydgoszcz (Poland): Quarterfinals: Weronika Falkowska (Pol) & Valentini Grammatikopoulou (Gre) bt Vaishnavi Adkar & Emma Slavikova (Cze) 6-4, 6-3.
$15,000 ITF women, Monastir: Quarterfinals: Iva Ivanova (Bul) bt Tanisha Kashyap 7-5, 3-0 (retired); **Doubles:** Alena Kovackova & Jana Kovackova (Cze) w/o Aaddi Gupta & Anna Tabunshchyk (Can).

Akanksha and Anahat enter the semifinal

Fifth seed Akanksha Salunkhe cruised past fourth seed Alexandra Haydon of Australia 11-4, 11-7, 11-3 in the quarterfinals of the $27,500 BEGA Open PSA women's squash tournament in Australia on Friday. In the semifinals, Akanksha will challenge second seed Habiba Hani of Egypt. Top seed Anahat Singh beat seventh seed Hayley Ward of South Africa 11-4, 11-9, 14-12 victory. In the last-four, Anahat will play Nour Khafagy of Egypt.

The results: Quarterfinals: Anahat Singh bt Hayley Ward (RSA) 11-4, 11-9, 14-12; Nour Khafagy (Egy) bt Nga Ching Cheng (Hkg) 6-11, 11-5, 11-5, 11-7; Akanksha Salunkha bt Alexandra Haydon (Aus) 11-4, 11-7, 11-3; Habiba Hani (Egy) bt Noa Romero 11-4, 11-9, 8-11, 11-5.

Leipzig signs Romulo as replacement for Sesko

Leipzig is spending a big chunk of the fee from Benjamin Sesko's move to Manchester United on his Brazilian replacement Romulo. Leipzig signed the 23-year-old striker on a five-year contract on Friday from Goztepe, where he scored 17 goals in the Turkish league and cup last season. At 6 feet, 4 inches tall, Romulo is only slightly shorter than Sesko, who left for United last week for a fee that could reach $99 million.

Yashika's strike does it for Roots against United

T. Yashika's goal helped Roots FC defeat United FC Kodagu 1-0 in the Karnataka Women's league football tournament in Bengaluru on Friday.

The results: Roots 1 (T. Yashika 26) bt United, Kodagu 0; Bengaluru 1 (Aarushi Ramdas 71) bt Maatru Pratishtana 0; Misaka United 8 (Thiemlalnei 15, 65, T. Esther 56, Shruthi Kumari 63, 74, N. Sanfida 80, 87, Jyoti 89) bt Pink Panther 1 (Smeeta Sundas 26).

A challenging ACL 2 campaign awaits Mohun Bagan and FC Goa

While the ISL champion has been drawn in Group C alongside Sepahan, Al Hussein and Ahal FC, it's the Kalinga Super Cup winner which is drawing eyeballs after being placed with Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Group D

FOOTBALL

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

All set: A screen displays the ACL Two group stage draw in Kuala Lumpur. AFP

Mohun Bagan Super Giant and FC Goa, the champion clubs of the country's top football tournaments, found their groups and opponents in the AFC Champions League Two first stage after the draw at football's continental body headquarters– AFC House – in Kuala Lumpur on Friday.

Mohun Bagan, the League Shield and Cup winner of the Indian Super League (2024-25 season), has been drawn in Group C alongside Sepahan SC of Iran, Al Hussein SC of Jordan and Ahal FC of Turkmenistan.

FC Goa, the Kalinga Super Cup 2025 winner, has been placed in Group D with Al Nassr Club of Saudi Arabia, which has former Ballon D'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo in its ranks, as the top draw. The other two sides are Al Zawra SC of Iraq and FC Istiklol of Tajikistan.

Goa qualified to the group stage after beating Al Seeb Club of Oman 2-1 in the preliminary stage playoff match at Fatorda on Wednesday. Mohun Bagan had directly qualified to the ACL 2 group stage by virtue of being the ISL topper.

The initial league format has all teams in the group facing each other in a home and away, double-round robin format. The group stage will run from September 16 to December 24. The top two from each group will qualify for the Round of 16.

The knock-out stage will be held between February 10 to 19, 2026. The quarterfinals and semifinals are scheduled between March 3 to 12 and April 7 to 15 while the final comes up on May 16, 2026.

The Iranian club Sepahan, runner-up in the Persian Gulf Pro League 2024-25, will be Bagan's toughest opponent considering it came from Pot 1 in the draw which arranged the teams in four categories according to their rankings.

The second team in the order is the Jordan Pro League champion Al Hussein SC while Bagan was placed in Pot 3.

Ahal FC, the runner-up of Turkmenistan's top league Yokary Liga (2024) is the last name in the group.

FC Goa (placed in pot 4) is up against a more fancied Al Nassr, the third-placed side from the Saudi Pro League.

Al Nassr employs a constellation of global stars like Sadio Mane among others in addition to Ronaldo.

The other teams are the Iraq Stars League runner-up Al Zawra'a SC and FC Istiklol, which is the Tajikistan Higher League champion.

England can beat any team: Edwards

CRICKET

Press Trust of India
LONDON

Former England women's cricket team captain Charlotte Edwards believes the side is preparing in earnest for the upcoming ODI World Cup despite suffering back-to-back reverses against India in the recently concluded multi-format series at the Old Blighty.

Edwards is currently the coach of the national side.

"We were massively challenged (against India) and that's how we want women's cricket to be," Edwards was quoted as saying on the *BBC Stumped* podcast.

"It wasn't a reality check. We know we can beat India. We are going into a World Cup where we know if we play our best, we can beat any team," she added.

Edwards said they were working hard to get rid of the tag of being a poor fielding side.

"Fielding is something we are working on. Sometimes I get frustrated because we can drop one catch and we are labelled a bad fielding team."

Ankita wins gold, breaks 2,000m steeplechase NR

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Ankita Dhyani broke the women's 2,000m steeplechase National record while winning gold at the Grand Slam Jerusalem athletics meet in Israel. The 23-year-old clocked 6m 13.92s to better the previous national mark of 6:14.38 held by Parul Chaudhary.

With the ranking points earned from the victory on Thursday, Ankita boosted her chances of qualifying for 3,000m steeplechase for the Worlds in Tokyo next month through the world ranking quota.

"The performance of 2,000m steeplechase will be counted for world ranking in 3,000m steeplechase for the Worlds in Tokyo," Indian athletics head coach Radhakrishnan Nair said.

The Grand Slam Jerusalem is a World Athletics Continental Tour silver-level (Category B) event.

Ankita. INSTAGRAM@ANKITADHYANI

Israel's Adva Cohen and Denmark's Juliane Hvid finished second and third in 6:15.20 and 6:17.80 respectively.

Lajong braces for Navy charge; Bodoland prepares for NorthEast

DURAND CUP

Press Trust of India
SHILLONG

Local favorite Shillong Lajong FC will square off with in-form Indian Navy FT while Bodoland FC would aim to extend its dream run when it clashes against defending champion NorthEast United FC in the Durand Cup football quarterfinals on Saturday.

Attackers Everbrightson Sana and Phrangki Buam have been central to Lajong's offensive rhythm, with the side averaging over two goals per game this season.

Coach Birendra Thapa is clear about the team's approach.

"We play very aggressive and very attacking which is our biggest strength."

With physicality and fitness as its hallmarks, the Navy side will look to silence the packed Shillong crowd and execute its set-piece-heavy game plan.

Getting set: Lajong players during a training session prior to their quarterfinal against Indian Navy. X@LAJONGFC

Its head coach Ramesh Rai exuded confidence ahead of the contest.

First-time quarterfinalist Bodoland FC stormed through the group stage with a perfect nine points.

Coach Vikash Panthi has instilled a blend of attacking football and defensive discipline; the side's transition play and pacey wingers are expected to pose problems for NorthEast.

"Tactics will be displayed on the pitch during the match," said Panthi, keeping his cards close to his chest while hinting at a meticulously prepared game plan for the high-stakes clash.

But NorthEast United arrives as the heavyweight favourite, seeking back-to-back Durand Cup titles after winning Group E, anchored by coach Juan Pedro Benali's superb tactical approach.

Benali's side has retained its free-flowing attacking style from last season and blended seasoned ISL campaigners with promising young talent.

Shubhang's all-round show takes Blasters to eight-wicket victory against Lions

C.K. Muralidharan
MYSURU

In a rain-hit match reduced to six overs a side, skipper Shubhang Hegde's all-round performance (3/7 & 14 n.o.) helped last year's runner-up Bengaluru Blasters register an eight-wicket win over Shivamogga Lions in the Maharaja Trophy here on Friday.

Set a target of 63 in six overs, Blasters started off well with openers L.R. Chethan (16, 6b, 1x4, 2x6) and Rohan Patil (12, 5b, 1x4, 1x6) adding 25 for the first wicket. Mayank Agarwal (18 n.o., 10b, 2x4, 1x6) and Shubhang (14 n.o., 4b, 2x6) put on 32 off 12 balls to guide their team to victory with 10 balls to spare.

Earlier, put in to bat, Lions got off to a decent start with skipper Nihal Ullal (31, 12b, 3x4, 3x6) and Anneshwar (one) adding 34 for the opening wicket in 2.2 overs. Left-arm spinner Shubhang struck thrice in his two overs to reduce Lions to 43 for five in 4.2 overs. Lions made 62 for six in six overs.

The scores: Shivamogga Lions 62/6 in six overs (Nihal Ullal 31, Shubhang Hegde 3/7, Mohsin Khan 2/5) lost to Bengaluru Blasters 63/2 in 4.2 overs. **Toss:** Blasters; **PoM:** Shubhang Hegde.

LIVE TELECAST

Australia vs South Africa: 3rd T20I, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & JioHotstar, 2.45 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 5, 7.30 & 10 p.m.
Durand Cup: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 4 & 7 p.m.
LaLiga: FanCode, 11 p.m. & 1 a.m. (Sunday).

Vital contribution: Skipper Shubhang came good with both bat and ball for Blasters.

Endless possibilities for Duplantis

Agence France-Presse
CHORZÓW, POLAND

Armand Duplantis has predicted a "super-sick" World championships in Tokyo, where he won his first Olympic medal in the Covid-delayed Summer Games, but insisted statistics were unimportant to him.

The US-born Swede has been in electric form, setting a 13th world record, of 6.29 metres, in Budapest on Tuesday.

"I'm making sure that all the little details are polished and that I'm really ready to go at the most important time," Duplantis said on Thursday ahead of the Diamond League meet in Silesia, Poland.

"It is an amazing feeling and I'm always grateful. It feels surreal every time I've been able to push the number a bit higher," the Olympic medallist said.

A return to Tokyo's Olympic Stadium for the world games, with a full house compared to the empty tribunes in 2021, left Duplantis "super excited".

High expectations

"I have high expectations," he said. "It's going to super sick, honestly. It's just up to me to enjoy it and channel what everybody's giving me to put up a good show.

"I love competing and it doesn't matter how many world records I break," the 25-year-old said.

"They don't just give me the trophy because I'm the favourite. I still have to go out there and be on my A game."